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The equitable construction of social institutions

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Offered for examination for a Ph.D.

at the Open University

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The equitable construction of social institutions

Search every land from Cadiz to the dawn-streaked shores
Of Ganges, and you will find few men who can distinguish
A false from a worthwhile objective, or slash their way through
The fogs of deception. Since when were our fears or desires
Ever dictated by reason? What project goes so smoothly
That you never regret the idea, let alone its realisation?

Juvenal, Tenth Satire, *circa* 117 AD

translated by Peter Green, Penguin, 1967

When a man is told something that turns things upside down; that the tail wags the dog; that the fish has caught the fisherman; that the earth goes round the moon; he takes some little time before he even asks seriously if it is true. He is still content with the consciousness that it is the opposite of the obvious truth.

G. K. Chesterton, *The Scandal of Father Brown*

Cassell, 1929

....not at all sure what the examiners were looking for in the answers - their ideas or his ideas, or the former subtly disguised as the latter, or the latter masquerading as the former. In the end he boldly put down his own ideas, without any thought as to whether the examiners would find them palatable or not. He set forth an idealistic view of a society in which all privilege would be done away with.....

Michael Frayn, *Sweet Dreams*

Flamingo, 1979 page 72

Assertion of originality, and acknowledgements

The ideas expressed in this thesis have their sources in many recognised and forgotten incidents. I formulated my moral commitments while studying for an M.A. in philosophy, and of paradigmatic intervention while studying for an M.A. in Development Studies.

My thanks are due to many people; Alan, my supervisor, for tolerating my eccentricities, arguing our differences, and propping me up throughout; of others inside the department, I would like to mention in particular, June, Pat, Angela, Debbie, Mary and Marjorie, and my colleagues Robert, Nicki, Dave and Dave.

Most importantly I must thank my mother, for living her life the way she did, and offering me a set of values which I am happy to have inherited. This one's for her.

Abstract

My aim was to establish a rationale for co-operative behaviour, based on my own experiences, elaborated and tested through academic research, and then further refined through conversations with a variety of people who might be thought to act in a way that is consistent with the rationale. The methodology explains why this process might be thought appropriate to a doctoral thesis.

In the introduction, some of the essential underlying premises of the thesis are presented, together with an outline of the shape of the argument. Briefly, that shape is as follows.

A set of ontological, moral, and epistemological commitments are stated. These are then used to derive a methodology, including comparisons with a variety of conventional approaches, and an attempt to assess some of the potential difficulties and disadvantages of the chosen method.

The rationale of co-operation that emerged from this process is then presented, and followed by an attempt to explain how the assertions made in the rationale relate to a variety of existing academic discourses. After this, the field work is discussed, both in terms of its progress, and as a report on the sorts of ideas that were offered to me by those with whom I spoke.

In conclusion, there is a brief set of reflections on how the research went, and what might be learned from the process.

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Part 1

In which my aim - the participative development of a rationale for co-operation - is briefly introduced; and in which an explanation for my approach is explored at inordinate length.

1. An introduction

§1.

To begin at a beginning: I am arranging these words as I sit up a tree over a small stream in Provence.

I don't know where you are reading them, but I assume that such an event will take place; and if it doesn't, or doesn't approximate to my understanding of that which is constituted by such an event, it probably doesn't matter if I make the assumptions that I make.

Firstly, I assume my consciousness is implicit in the idea that some form of communication is taking place: and if my talking to you is to make sense, I must suppose that you have consciousness too.

Secondly; if we had free access to each others' consciousness, why would we have to talk like this? It seems likely that our consciousnesses are not directly interconnected.

Thirdly, the outcomes of our communications do not suggest complete understanding of the subject matter. The course of my experience remains

unpredictable. Owing to limited access to each other's consciousness, there is a lack of experiential or formal confirmation which prevents us accepting propositions as more than subjectively certain truths, or the form of those propositions as necessarily appropriate.

Fourthly, since we seem to have chosen to work together in this strange disjointed project of scriptural communication, we would seem to have preferences; and it is from such preferences that our understandings of what is good are derived.

Fifthly, since we have attributed consciousness and preferences to each other, we accept each others' moral relevance, if *morality* is to be a significant term.

Sixthly, in the absence of correspondent truth as a criterion for our beliefs, we may have to use the pragmatic criterion of usefulness for any practical propositions of which we become aware; and from the fourth and fifth commitments made here, usefulness will clearly have to be assessed in terms of the preferences of those who are morally relevant.

Rather than invite you to familiarise yourself with this whole set, may I suggest that you think of it as a sceptical, pragmatic, consequentialist perspective? I don't ask you to swallow the viewpoint wholesale straight off; part of my job is to show why I think it reasonable to look at things from this point of view. Indeed, such an elaboration is essential, because the set of assumptions, in one form or another, acts as the basis of the whole thesis.

That which is essential, however, is not always urgent. Before the ground is examined in more detail, some preliminary exploration may be well worth the investment.

§2.

In the first place; why have I started where I did?

Common to a variety of discourses is the notion that behind or beyond a belief, there are others which are used to explain why that belief is held. Where *ideology* operates in the discourse of political analysis [Hall, 1981], *premises* feature in logic [Hodge, 1976:54]; *personal constructs* are surfaced in therapeutic practice [Kelly, 1955]; *grand narratives* arise in hermeneutic discourse [Taket and White, 1995a], and *meta-methodologies* and *boundary assumptions* are popular terms in systemic discourse [Flood and Jackson, 1991c; Ulrich, 1991; Midgley, 1992]. The term *commitments* is borrowed from Kaminsky's use in relation to essential ontological assumptions [Kaminsky, 1982:43].

In this discussion, the two focal terms from this set will be *commitments* and *ideology*. The former is at the heart of the epistemological examination of the rôle of the social scientist; the latter will seem more appropriate when that role is enacted as an intervention in a political context. In each case, there is an attempt to identify an underlying set of beliefs which would support (or from which may be derived) an acceptable guide to practice. The referents of the two terms are consistent with each other; but, owing to their membership of discourses which serve different functions and different social groups, their forms are distinguishable. These groups and functions are not, of course, by any means entirely discrete; and so the two themes will be thoroughly intertwined.

This sense of a common ground, however, does not necessarily lead to the specification of a set of shared commitments; so where might we start? What lies beyond our differences?

Perhaps the principal difficulty about any attempt to review underlying assumptions is that the process can be regressive to the point of absurdity. Moving beyond a field of cognitive uncertainty does not permit us to attribute certainty to that which we discern beyond, any more than removing the layers of an onion exposes an essence of onion; an onion is no more than the layers of which it is made up, and metatheories share the uncertainty of the theories to which they relate. In neither of these cases is there a categorially distinct emergent.

All that we can infer from our apparent capacity to discover explanations for our beliefs is that we have other beliefs. However, as Ulrich has implied, the inaccessibility of ultimate justifications is not a sound reason to refuse to enter upon the process of examining our assumptions [Ulrich, 1991:113]. Even if the derivation of our grounding commitments is theory-laden, we have to start somewhere. Was Descartes right then to suggest that we should start from the boundary of experience; from that which we feel least able to doubt?

Although this may seem to invoke a notorious philosophical calamity, I hope to have side-stepped that confusion. As Ryle pointed out, Descartes was committing a categorical error in conflating the experience of thought with the existence of a thinker [Ryle, 1963]. We cannot infer a personal entity simply because it is convenient to attribute causality of thought to a further construct which belongs to a distinct category. The thinker is no more than the thoughts [Clark 1991]. However, there is a distinction between the appropriateness of the method Descartes proposed in his

***Meditations* and the use he made of it. Doubts about the *Cogito* do not refute the reflective methodology itself. If we are uncertain, what can we do other than go back and see if there is anything in experience to which we can commit ourselves?**

Descartes found, not surprisingly, since he was talking to himself, that he could not doubt that there is personal experience. Here, the boundary of the domain is social rather than personal, so we might seek what is indubitable in our social experience. Narrowing the domain a little further, our concern is essentially with the cognitive and communicative aspects of society, which many have seen as central to social behaviour. Hewitt, for example, has proposed that

human conduct depends on the creation and maintenance of meaning;
human conduct is self-referential; people form conduct as they interact
with each other; and society and culture shape and constrain conduct.....

[Hewitt, 1991:218]

Concerning these more particular academic circumstances, Mason has argued that research is itself an aspect of the social construction of knowledge; "the more or less systematic and critical accomplishment of meaning - the active conferral of sense upon the world." [Mason, 1992:115]

What is given, to whatever extent we can expose it, in the experience of communication, the process of conferring meaning? I'm happy to suggest that the set of ideas with which we started would be reflected in many people's experience; that is, that they can be asserted as a rationally defensible set of commitments, even if, reflexively, none of this can be certain. Each analysis of communication operates within a metaphorical construction [Krippendorf, 1993], and since these propositions have been expressed in a language which imposes its own implicit rationality, they can make no claims to unique propriety. All that can be hoped is that they have the

potential to be shared as a set of ontological, epistemological and moral commitments.

(Aesthetic commitments are also taken to be part of the set. Ultimately, however, these are taken to be inaccessible to other critiques than personal reflection, and so are given as data rather than as a negotiated prelude to intellectual construction.)

For these reasons I have started as I did: by trying to give you reason to accept, however temporarily, the premises of sceptical pragmatic consequentialism.

§3.

The presentation of these ideas in this form is not intended to force you into submission; only to persuade you that they are worthy of further consideration. One of the few points on which Feyerabend [1988] and Popper [1963:352,1972:148] agreed, was that the scientific method is more concerned with assessing ideas than with defining the characteristics of those ideas we should be willing to consider.

This is, however, an academic paper, and certain demands must be met; so why might I hope that you will feel that what I've written helps to confer rational meaning on our collisions and collusions? On what grounds would I suggest that belief is justified?

Two points seem worth making at this early stage. Firstly, there is the question of the nature of rationality. As must be evident from the commitments made above, I have a limited respect for the idea of an ultimately rational syntax. I would, for example, qualify Richards' interpretation of language:

[Logic] is a set of rules presupposed by the existence of language; not just some particular language, but any language. The most fundamental rule is that of non-contradiction. [Richards,1982:37].

In this, I would say, she is going too far. Language does not always operate through unequivocal reference, formal logic, and the excluded middle. When Grace Nicholls writes of

my tainted
perfect child
my bastard fruit
my seedling
my sea grape
my strange mulatto [Nicholls,1992:42]

consistency is not a relevant criterion. To be tainted is to be imperfect, and yet Nicholls is using language powerfully and effectively. Richards' argument might be taken properly to refer only to certain forms of discourse. However, amongst these forms are those within which this thesis must find a home. Consistency will be accepted, therefore, as a significant, if not conclusive, criterion of belief: but it should also be noted that only those who have projects involving access to certainty must, to be consistent, show that the consistency of their argument is grounded in indubitable axioms.

An alternative to the positivist project may seem more worthy of consideration. Despite the limited effectiveness of our communication skills, we still have a remarkable capacity for the participative construction of useful knowledge. Apparently shared ideas are not, however, to be confused with certainty.

Words can convey information, a series of algebraic symbols can constitute a mathematical deduction, a map can set out the

topography of a region; but neither words nor symbols, nor maps can be said to communicate an understanding of themselves. Though such statements will be made in a form which best induces an understanding of their message, the sender of the message will always have to rely for the comprehension of his message on the intelligence of the person addressed. Only by this act of comprehension, of this tacit contribution of his own, can the receiving person be said to acquire knowledge when he is presented with a statement. [Polanyi, 1958:22]

Although a little unfashionable if taken to imply that communication is a precise transfer of data, or that it is uni-directional, Polanyi's argument reflects the basic position adopted here: that while knowledge is socially constructed, it is personally experienced, and remains uncertain.

If, in our uncertainty, we seek to respect the personal experiences and preferences of others, an essential activity of any individual will be our skilful and considerate participation in the construction of knowledge and of social institutions. (Institutions are understood here to conform to Uphoff's description "complexes of norms and behaviours that persist over time by serving collectively valued purposes" [Uphoff, 1993:614]). This applies as much, if not more, to the supposedly expert interventionist, the social scientist. We are not, in this view, engineers or even very successful cartographers. We are participants in the construction of social institutions.

If we accept that there is uncertainty in such a process, we may take a further step. We may choose to believe that the assessment of any intervention in the affairs of others lies with those others, rather than with ourselves as social scientists. To claim

magisterial authority for our own assessments where there is no point of neutral observation would seem to indicate an unreasonable degree of self-assurance.

This conclusion is not always welcomed by social scientists; nor are the premises. The persistent devotion to the axiomatic structuring of arguments, which I distrust, is evidence that conservatism is alive and well within the discipline. As you become familiar with my understanding of understanding, my distrust will, I hope, become plausible and persuasive, if it is not so already. At this juncture, however, the crucial aspect of methodology that might require immediate examination is a distinction between rigidity and rigour. To me, rigidity is the principal quality displayed by the axiomatic processes of formal propositional logic. If A then B; A; therefore, B.

Reasons for doubting that this is an adequate approach to describing experience will be elaborated in possibly tedious detail in due course. For the minute, let me suggest, firstly, that if we don't know A with any degree of certainty, the conclusion B is of no greater significance; and, secondly, that the whole style of looking at the world as a series of self-contained causal series may not be as plausible as the traditional understanding of rigour would have us think. Could we not think of rigour instead as the refusal to believe something merely because it is personally convenient to do so? This alternative might be termed *sceptical rigour*, the continual, undefensive, socially responsive, recursive and reflexive reconstruction of our shared understandings.

In simpler terms, the process could be described thus: Let us suppose A. Let us give the label B to whatever else I would have to believe in order to believe A. Do I find B credible? To the extent that I do, A remains temporarily unreconstructed; to the extent that B is incredible, A must be amended. A has become A'. What else would I have to believe in order to believe A'?

And so ad infinitum.

The context of belief preferred here will follow this pattern: that is, if I ask you to accept the rationality of my belief in sceptical pragmatic consequentialism, and in its implications, what else must I ask you to accept as rational?

Partly, I must ask you to believe that certain conflicting views are less worthy of adoption, and that partially coincidental views still leave room for an alternative arrangement of ideas. I will also try to show on each issue that I am addressing a recognised theoretical domain; my maps may use different colours and symbols, and describe an alternative conception, but they will cover that which has been widely agreed to constitute a relevant territory.

This describes, more or less, the method I will use in seeking to persuade you of the rationality of my understanding. The first half of what follows will be reflexive; using the method to show why I think the method is appropriate, and exploring the implications for the behaviour of social scientists in their interactions with those who are not social scientists.

To summarise the argument which will follow: if knowledge is not an objective, correspondent and definitive description, the principal criterion of belief is not that it accords with certain knowledge of its truth. As an alternative, a criterion for belief that could be preferred is that of usefulness.

This criterion offers little methodological guidance; but it will be argued that the likelihood of social scientists making a useful contribution will be increased if certain

subordinate criteria are also accepted. Firstly, if we are to claim any special status, we must surely be fearless, critical and rigorous in testing the assumptions on which the construction of our realities depends. As academics, therefore, we seek consistency within a chosen discourse. Such activities will be described here as the attempt to meet a criterion of *validation*. However, following from Polanyi, we may add another criterion. *Legitimation* may be described as a demand that we make our conceptual models accessible to the ownership of others; while, thirdly, from the privacy of aesthetic experience and the commitment to pragmatism, *justification* may be thought to require the acceptance of the utility of our interventions by those who are affected.

Eventually, then, I will argue that the utility of a belief may be gauged by the extent to which it has been legitimated, validated and justified: but a more precise understanding of what this is intended to signify will have to emerge as the argument is developed.

§4.

Despite the amount of attention given to the method of the research, there is a wider aim, which is concerned with the mode of organisation of society. I have hoped to contribute to the ideological constructions surrounding co-operative behaviour. Co-operation, in the terms which have emerged, has its focus in *the equitable construction of social institutions*.

Following Laszlo [1972], I assume that a change of domain does not permit a denial of my earlier commitments; sceptical, pragmatic consequentialism, in brief. While some [eg: Mansell, 1994] have argued that the world might be constituted in discrete dimensions each of which has its own immiscible rationality, Laszlo suggested that if

there appear to be descriptive disjunctions, those disjunctions would derive from the descriptive systems rather than from that which they seek to describe.

Nevertheless, the commitments that have been adopted here may appear in a different guise when used in a different context. The discourse of political economy is not identical in form, content, or membership to that which concerns itself with the epistemology and methodology of the social sciences. Additional commitments are also necessary, for the field of analysis has broadened. In the discourse of political economy, a further set of ontological commitments are invoked. The political economic argument favoured here is based on a conception of a universe that is being continually transformed, in part by factors beyond our control, but in part because of purposeful acts by conscious beings. Transformations and transactions can be identified and described, and their consequences assessed. Those consequences will be seen to be dependent on the type of social institutions we construct; and the combined moral and ontological arguments will suggest that equity in their construction is paramount.

This argument, which is discussed in the second half of the thesis, seems in no way inconsistent with the commitments on which the first depends. Both the reflexive and the ideological arguments are rooted in the same set of conceptions; and this seems quite proper. If one assumes social scientists to be human, there is no reason why their behaviour shouldn't be governed by the same criterion as the rest of society; that is, equitable participation in the construction of social institutions. Reciprocally, the co-operative ideology constructed here is presumably to be governed by the criterion of utility: that is, the paradigm of co-operation will have to be validated, legitimated, and in a form which makes its eventual justification a credible possibility.

Does this all seem a little too much like pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps? If so, the phenomenon must be recognised as one of the consequences of my finding positivism and axiomatic construction implausible.

§5.

To recapitulate the shape of the thesis, then: the reflexive theme will dominate the first half of the thesis, while the second half will be devoted to the ideological theme.

I will start by attempting to explain in more depth why I hold the ontological, moral and epistemological commitments expressed here. Having explored my own beliefs, I will then attempt to identify a niche amid the more radical and reformative conceptions of the role of the social scientist that are currently emerging. Since none that I have discovered quite matches my aims and beliefs, an alternative method is constructed, and its limitations explored.

In the second half, the application of the method to the construction of a paradigm of co-operation will be described; though since, historically, the two strands were spun concurrently, this form of presentation should not be taken too literally. Tradition will be respected by the presence of a conclusion, despite the iterative nature of the non-axiomatic method of this research. Following the principle of a progressive research programme, suggested by Lakatos [1974,1978], the idea of a conclusion is rather a misnomer; if we began at a beginning, we will also end at one.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy our momentarily one-sided conversation.

2. The ontological commitments

How might we conceive of the nature of the universe, and of our place in it?

Transformation is only one of many ways, but it has a creditable pedigree.

Its use in the description of human circumstances can easily be traced to the Taoism of ancient China [Zhu,1996:110], and more recently to Greek schools of thought such as that of Heraclitus, to Indian Buddhism [Snelling,1990], and through the writings of Capra [1975] to contemporary theories of matter. [Indeed, it may be generally inferred that the conception of the universe implicit to the syntax of our language is deceptive; there are no nouns, only slow verbs.] Within the common context, much diversity can be found, of course. The transcendental philosophy of Buddha and the materialism of Marx, for example, are in stark contrast, despite the links that can be traced through the dialectics of Hegel; but transformation remains central.

On an historically narrower canvas, systems theory in particular has demonstrated an awareness of the centrality of transformation; Buckley [1972], Easton [1972], Checkland [1981], Susman [1983], and Vickers [1984] have all contributed to the emphasis on this theme. Critics of this school, including Ulrich [1991] and Flood and Jackson [1991c], have used the strains of thought represented by Habermas and Foucault to draw attention to the issues of power which have sometimes been neglected. In the process, it has become apparent that every transformation implies a redistribution of costs and benefits, and the necessity of incorporating the notion of transaction into the analysis of change has been emphasised.

Not that this recognition is unique to this school, of course: both sociology and organisation theory link transformation and transaction. To Blau, following Simmel, transactions are the favoured analytic perspective.

All contacts among men rest on the schema of giving and returning the equivalence. The equivalence of innumerable gifts and performances can be enforced. In all economic exchanges in legal form, in all fixed agreements concerning a given service, in all obligations of legalised relations, the legal constitution enforces and guarantees the reciprocity of service and return service - social equilibrium and cohesion do not exist without it. But there are also innumerable other relations to which the legal form does not apply, and in which the enforcement of the equivalence is out of the question. Here gratitude appears as a supplement. It establishes the bond of interaction, of the reciprocity of service and return service, even when they are not guaranteed by external coercion.....[Simmel *cited in* Blau 1967:1]

The distinction between the voluntary and involuntary forms of transaction will also feature predominantly in this discussion.

Within organisation theory, Abrahamson [1977], for example, reviews a wide range of theories largely in terms of the purposeful transformation of resources to meet the diverse interests of those with influence over the organisation of society. The approach favoured by Morgan [1986] posits transformation as one of a number of metaphors of organisation, though on inspection it becomes apparent that transformation and transaction are crucial to each of the other metaphors.

Other discourses have also focussed on transactions as their central dynamic.

Economics is perhaps the most obvious discipline to adopt such a perspective, but

diversity in the perception of the processes involved is not restricted to different schools of economic thought. Compare, for example, the exchange of promissory signs through which Goffman [1969] sought to present human relations, with materialist market theory, as represented by Friedman's arguments [1984].

The integration of such themes has also been achieved. Sen, in his models of endowment and entitlement [1977, 1981, 1991], uses game theory to develop ideas about how the outcome of exchanges is influenced by its social context. Similarly, the concept *livelihood strategy* has been used to analyse the transformation of personal, material and social resources and to avoid the reduction of economic behaviour to the operation of the market [Gudeman, 1986; Bishop, 1990].

Transformation and transaction is, then, taken to be an acceptable form in which to discuss our environment; and, indeed, ourselves, though other commitments about human nature will be described later on.

3. The moral commitments

More controversy is evident in the establishment of the moral commitments. Luckily, however, there is a well-established paradigm within which to construct those commitments. When moral decisions are discussed, the implied grounds of morality seem to fall quite readily into a taxonomy of consequences, rights, and duties; but clearly the issue requires more consideration than a random choice between the three.

A right may appear inviolable or contingent, a right to act or a right to non-interference, but in each instance rights also imply reciprocal duties. My right not to be molested implies your duty not to molest me. Indeed, since a duty without an object towards which that duty was to be observed would be unintelligible, duties may for most purposes be seen as the reciprocal of rights; but if this is the case, from what source do rights and duties derive their moral force?

Although other possibilities may be imagined, three principal options for the underlying moral ground of rights, and by implication of duties, would seem to be on offer. There is a category which might be described as *the word of god*; there is an *a priori* assertion in the manner of the American Declaration of Human Rights; or, for those who believe that morality is a social construct related to experience, there is the third option: that rights and duties are a rule of thumb expression of the general solutions found to consequentialist negotiation. Supporting this viewpoint, Scanlon has disaggregated the form that is taken by a right into three successive types of claim; an empirical claim about what happens in the absence of a particular right: a claim that the consequences would be unacceptable; and another empirical claim about how the assignment of a right would produce a different outcome [Scanlon, 1988:84].

Perhaps it would be as well to elaborate a little on consequentialism before the relations between the arguments are looked at in any more detail.

Consequentialism may be divided into three movements. Firstly, there is that which may be described as simple consequentialism; the assumption that an event is good if it arouses feelings of well-being in me, and that a good intention is one intended to give rise to such an event. Secondly, there is transpersonal consequentialism; the recognition that if this is the case for one of us, it is also applicable to others.

(Although this could be described as a right to be taken as morally relevant or to be respected, this right, unless it is asserted *a priori* after the fashion of Kant [Paton, 1948], or given as the word of god, is grounded in consequentialism.) There is no inconsistency for a consequentialist to suggest that people have a right to be treated as morally relevant, since the right is grounded in the consequences of no such right being acknowledged. The third phase of consequentialism may be described as practical consequentialism, an attempt to balance the utilities arising from an act or an intention. [Brauer, 1992]

Attempts to compare utilities, it has to be acknowledged, bristle with imponderables and complexities; but why should we expect moral thought, which is, after all principally concerned with comparative values, to be simple? If it were, surely we could expect some previous generation, no less wise than ourselves, to have resolved at least the basic issues. Thus the difficulty of specifying the exact nature of utility should not concern us. That we do in practice make moral choices between diverse ends and interests shows that value-incommensurability can only refer to difficulties of comparison, not to an absolute incapacity.

Dewey offers a historical analysis to explain why there are many who find it difficult to entertain such indeterminacy:

The impact of the alteration in methods of scientific thinking upon moral ideas is, in general, obvious. Goods, ends are multiplied. Rules are softened into principles, and principles are modified into methods of understanding. Ethical theory began among the Greeks as an attempt to find a regulation for the conduct of life which should have a rational basis and purpose instead of being derived from custom. But reason as a substitute for custom was under the obligation of supplying objects and

laws as fixed as those of custom had been. Ethical theory has ever since been hypnotised by the notion that its business is to discover some final end or good or some ultimate and supreme law. [Dewey, 1950:131]

The difficulties should not then discourage us. The term *utility* is helpful, even though it is often extraordinarily abused. Simply, the idea emerges from the dichotomy that either our values are in some way comparable, or they are completely divorced from each other. (Whatever the objections to dichotomies, the law of the excluded middle would appear to be applicable in this case.) Given these alternatives we may conclude that, if values were incomparable, there would be no way to resolve conflicting preferences for ourselves, or conflicting interests between ourselves. Since it is evident that such processes take place, there is reason to suppose that some symbol that refers to the comparability of values will be helpful; a phenomenon without a symbol is difficult to incorporate in our shared conceptual schemes. Why there should be any objection to the use of the term *utility* for this purpose is not readily apparent.

It might be supposed that rights could supply an alternative moral ground, but there is a fundamental problem. If rights are not in the end to rely on some external factor, they must be so expressed and so structured that conflicts between them do not arise. Two alternatives are generally recognised as potentially fulfilling such a function.

One alternative would be to assert that rights can be defined in terms of some kind of lexical ordering, so that we could identify at any moment which right took priority. Experience should teach us to view such a claim with suspicion; by reference to the law alone we should be able to detect that although statements of rights have rule of thumb utility, they are always hedged about with qualifications, special cases,

mitigations and circumstantial exceptions, rather than offering a streamlined algorithm of priorities.

Many unsuccessful attempts have been made to establish such an algorithm. Nozick, for example, asserted that autonomy has primacy as a right, and that "side constraints express the inviolability of others" [Nozick, 1974:32]. Reliance on his system becomes less persuasive when he admits that "The question of whether these side constraints are absolute, or whether they may be violated in order to avoid catastrophic moral horror, and if the latter what the resulting structure might look like, is one I hope largely to avoid." [*ibid*:30] Nozick's breezy optimism may be attractive, but since there is a *prima facie* case that rights conflict, his argument cannot be thought to meet any criteria of philosophical rigour.

Rawls, who was also opposed to consequentialism, did not attempt to evade the issue of conflicting rights in offering his theory of justice. He suggested that there could be a lexical ordering. However, since he also accepted that lexical ordering can do no more than offer an approximate solution in certain social circumstances [Rawls, 1972: 44], reliance on his system would seem to be inadvisable.

The first response to the problem of conflicting rights has not thus far proved successful. A partial alternative has been proposed; that there are certain rights which are inviolable.

The primary right, it has been suggested, could be the right to respect; that is, to be recognised as morally relevant. However, not only does this seem to be grounded in consequentialism, as has been suggested above, it is also too general to provide any guidance beyond the idea of a practical consequentialist negotiation: as Brathwalte

has pointed out, as a right is pushed towards a semblance of inviolability, its substantive content is eroded [*cited in Robinson, 1964:34*].

Substance could be achieved by allying the right to respect to another element. A favourite is the right to life, but this is clearly not inviolable; we do not expect all the resources of society to be devoted to the maintenance of life, so we do not consider the right to life to be inviolable. What, then, if we claim a right that life should not be deliberately curtailed? Would this apply to a child rapist, if the only way he could be prevented from raping and murdering a child was to kill him? Clearly there are circumstances in which someone else's right to non-interference may conflict with another's. Guilt and innocence may then be introduced as variables: but what if a runaway coach can be directed only so that it instantaneously kills one blind old man, or hits a party of thirty school-children? At least one innocent life must be sacrificed.

Apparently there is great difficulty in establishing a substantive inviolable right; yet if this cannot be achieved neither lexical ordering nor a compatible set of inviolable rights can be identified, and rights become all the more evidently dependent on an external moral ground. If rights are not intrinsically legitimate, the potential or actual consequences of exercising those rights would seem to be the source of their legitimacy.

Desperation to avoid this conclusion has provoked some imaginative responses; for example, Gewirth's attempt to isolate at least one inviolable right by asserting that an innocent man has a right not to torture his mother in order to save others - in Gewirth's argument, a city threatened by nuclear terrorism [Gewirth, 1984]. What if the alternative is that his mother will be tortured to death anyway by someone made up to look like him, and that the threat will be repeated with his wife and children as the

subjects? Would we not then intuitively wonder how to balance the evil consequences? Of course, this is all becoming rather fantastic; which only goes to show the lengths rights theorists have to go to in search of an inviolable right. Even if a substantive moral horror deserving infinite moral weighting can be invented [Mill, 1991], the grounds may still be adequately described in terms of consequentialism, while a subordinate ordering of rights is still not accomplished.

Perhaps at this point the methodology of moral philosophy requires some explanation, since thought experiments apparently annoy some people. Sayer, for example, congratulates himself on having "deliberately avoided the philosopher's irritating habit of using trivial examples....If a philosophical point is worth making, it may as well be illustrated by an example which not only gives clarification but suggests its social and practical significance." [Sayer, 1992:7]

However, when we venture into thought experiments, we learn about our preconceptions rather than about the essential qualities of nature [Kuhn, 1977:242]; and, if we accept that morality is a human construct, then it is precisely thought experiments that expose the underlying rationalities of our moral responses.

Enough of rights; and since duties are the reciprocal of rights, and, except by reference to an exogenous source only exist in relation to rights, that which applies to rights theory applies also to deontology. There are, however, a variety of challenges to consequentialism which have not yet been mentioned or answered.

Intention is sometimes suggested as a confusion within consequentialism. Bradley, following Kant [Paton, 1948], argued that

The act for me means my act and no end beyond the act. This we see in the belief that failure may be morally equivalent to success - in the saying that there is nothing good except a good will. [Bradley, 1988:65]

In making this claim, Bradley conflates intention and outcomes. If the intention was to achieve a beneficial outcome, the intention was good. That good intentions may fail changes this not one whit; and the recurrent suggestion that consequentialism cannot be concerned with intentions or motives is clearly nonsensical.

Secondly, we may revisit value incommensurability:

..the thesis that fundamental values or reasons for action may conflict with one another in such a way that we have no means of resolving the conflict by rational arbitration has since received authoritative statements in the work of Williams, Hampshire, and most particularly, Raz. Value-incommensurability is evidently fatal to any utilitarian calculus, and, if pervasive, to any sort of consequentialism. [Gray, 1991:ix]

This perspective, however, appears dependent on the following dubious assumptions:

- that rationality is monolithic;
- that academic authority is an adequate determinant of complex moral and epistemological issues;
- and that utilitarian calculus is a mechanical process.

The first two assumptions seem dependent on rationalist arrogance; that where experience conflicts with a dominant theory, both experience and alternative explanations can be safely rejected. In my experience, people every day resolve moral conflicts to which no expressed rule applies, even if three well-respected academics declare it to be as impossible as the flight of the bumble-bee.

If my experience is shared, Gray's third criticism is only sustainable if one takes the hardest reading of *calculus*; and while *utilitarian calculus* is a term that might have been selected to arouse antagonism, there would be no more sense in rejecting consequentialism for such a reason than there would be in rejecting rights theory on the ground that Mussolini claimed a right to rule Slovenia. Distortions and exaggerations should not be allowed to undermine that which they misrepresent.

As a third popular objection to consequentialism, *promising* is sometimes presented as a hindrance:

In so far as I can see, if I could bring equal amounts of good into being by fulfilling my promise and by helping someone to whom I had made no promise, I should not hesitate to regard the former as my duty. Yet on the view that what is right is right because it is productive of the most good, I should not so regard it. [Ross, 1930:18]

Misrepresentation sometimes appears so crude as to be satirical, and it is difficult not to regard this as such an instance. The habit of keeping promises is in itself rarely denied as a social benefit, just as breaking promises is a disutility. Let us suppose that Ross has promised to take someone in a wheelchair to a musical with a spectacular opening number. On his way to help and on a tight schedule, he sees an elderly person struggling in the rain to change a wheel on their car; do we suppose that he does other than balance the amount of good produced by helping the old person, taking his friend to the show, and keeping his promise? If the evaluation of the two major activities is equal, a consequentialist would urge him to keep his promise, since that was an additional benefit.

A calculation that is similar to Ross's and equally reductive, is commonly used as a criticism of consequentialism. The form in which Nozick states it suggests that

according to utilitarianism, a rampaging mob should be allowed to lynch an innocent man [Nozick, 1974:28]. If utilitarianism were simply impulsive majority rule, the argument might stand. If, however, the value to society of an absence of random or unjustified violence is recognised, it is hardly likely that even the crudest utilitarian calculus would, on a diachronous scale, favour an unjust lynching: even more so when it is recalled that Mill drew attention to the need to weight the consequences in terms of their severity and intensity [Mill, 1991:190]. The form of argument that anti-consequentialists are presenting is, in effect, to hypothesise that a consequentialist would reach a less compassionate summation than they would themselves. In doing so they are, in the first place, surreptitiously stuffing a straw man. Secondly, they are ignoring the process which has led them to their own conclusion, unless they are moral dogmatists; that is, that they have balanced all, brought all to mind, and judged that a certain course of action is, all in all, to be lauded above another.

Finally, Williams offers the following idea: that autonomic projects must be given great weight because they have intrinsic merit, apart from any supposed consequences. To demand that a man "should step aside from his own project and decision"

is to make him into a channel between the input of everyone's projects, including his own, and an output of optimific decision; but this is to neglect the extent to which *his* actions and *his* decisions have to be seen as the actions and decisions which flow from the projects and attitudes with which he is most closely identified. It is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity. [Williams, 1988:49]

Why one's own projects should have an intrinsic merit above that of collective projects such as the construction of an equitable morality is not made clear. Nor does Williams explain whether he is suggesting that the same act undertaken by a robot would have similar intrinsic worth; yet if it did not, the significant moral ground would seem to be

the consequences for the actor of having such a project. In addition, Dworkin's view of integrity may well seem more carefully considered:

Our notion of who we are, of self-identity, of being *this* person is linked to our capacity to find and refine oneself. The exercise of this capacity is what makes a life *mine*. And, if I am to recognise others as persons, as independent centres of consciousness, as *them*, then there is a requirement that I give weight to the way they define and value the world in deciding how I should act. [Dworkin, 1988:32]

Once again we find ourselves reverting to the moral complexities of transpersonal consequentialism: the idea that it is the complex equilibrium of effects, intended or actual, that determines whether an event or intention is good or bad. If the difficulties of practical consequentialism are apparent, that is a reason to become more skilled in the social negotiations that can resolve such issues. To believe that these difficulties provide an acceptable reason to accredit a set of rights is a feasible response, to which I have two codicils. Firstly, that since conflicts between rights have to be resolved by reference to some other principle, we must never lose sight of that principle. To do so leads to conceptually irresolvable frustrations when one person's rights have to be subordinated to those of another. Secondly, whereas non-positivist consequentialism asserts the primacy of individual experience and belief, rights theory tends to encourage the imposition of a set of moral rules chosen by an elite who far from necessarily represent all those who will be affected by them.

4. The epistemological commitments

In contrast to morality, a wide variety of epistemological models is available from which a methodological approach might be derived: and although this aspect of research is sometimes seen as a distraction from the 'real business' of the academic or the social scientist - Sayer claims that research design "is rarely discussed in a philosophically informed way" [Sayer, 1984:241] - at the least we require a set of epistemological commitments which will delineate the boundaries within which any methodology can reasonably be established. To operate beyond those boundaries would seem to be an ethically unreasonable extension of the role of the social or systemic scientist; and the scientist or academic who is unwilling to challenge the grounds of their belief is acting directly in contradiction of the supposed critical rigour of their discourse.

The epistemology that is most explicitly rejected here is that of the possibility of certainty in the description of social phenomena [*For a general discussion, see Ryan, 1981*]. More will be said of incommensurability in due course, but reasons for challenging positivism so vigorously deserve to be discussed at once.

Essentially, positivism and scepticism are seen to rely on thoroughly dissonant premises, though it should be noted that there is a certain asymmetry in the relationship.

From the point of view of the positivist, scepticism must be wrong. The sceptic says that although there is a possibility of certainty, there is no adequate reason for supposing that it is ever attained. The positivist says there is rational objective or intersubjective certainty in at least one instance: not, it must be emphasised, that

there might be certainty, since the conditional *might* negates the unconditional *certainty*, and replicates the sceptical position.

Another important point should also be noted: the positivist does not claim intuitive certainty, but certainty derived from the way in which the conclusion has been reached. Positivism is methodologically ratified certainty; and since more than one methodology would require a certainly reliable meta-methodology, positivism, one way or another, assumes a unitary methodology in any domain. Scepticism is thus constructed necessarily as a fallacy.

From the point of view of the sceptic, however, positivism is a possibility, and there is thus no incommensurability following immediately from the sceptical perspective. Indeed, epistemological incommensurability would appear to be an untenable position for a sceptic.

However, although scepticism can be resolved in nihilism, the more common response, which I share, is probably some form of pragmatism. If we cannot be certain, the criterion of belief becomes the utility of that belief. I do not expect the falling apple because of scientific methodology, but inductively, which is to say uncertainly [Hume, 1748]; and while I may respect scientific methodology in context, that too is an inductive belief, not a result of the methodology offering access to certainty.

If scepticism is adopted in relation to the natural sciences, the attitude is likely to be exponentially magnified with respect to the human sciences. One might argue that uncertainty in the human sciences does not reflect on the natural sciences, but unless one is willing to believe that the universe is actually a multiverse of interwoven

domains operating according to different rationalities, the segregation is implausible. One might attempt to retrieve the position by arguing that eventually all experience will be explicable in some positivist sense, but this, of course, is purely hypothetical, a confession of uncertainty, and a contribution to the sceptical case.

A pragmatist might yet believe that, although positivism is epistemologically untenable, the greatest utility is to believe in it. Such a conservative approach may appeal to some, but I share the views of Ashby and of Machiavelli, which will be explored later, that diversity, flexibility, and imagination contribute to the potential for adaptation and achievement. However, even those sceptical pragmatists who would concede a social benefit in non-pathological deviance [Buckley, 1981] may prefer positivism on self-interested grounds. Where methodological conformity supercedes utility as the measure of worth, authority and privileges can readily be conferred on brahmins and gatekeepers.

Thus, while scepticism does not in itself mirror the perception of incommensurability expressed by positivism, incommensurability may arise from a set of associated commitments. If the sceptic accepts

- commitments to utility as a criterion of belief,
- diversity as a pre-requisite of utility,
- and equity in social institutions,

positivism becomes practically and morally incommensurable with the sceptical position.

Nevertheless, accommodation between the sceptic and the positivist might be reached in the practice of many interventions. Individual positivists tend to appear blameless, both because their work may, coincidentally, be worthy of reward - not

because it is certain, but because it is useful; and because they may never have learned to think outside the conventions of their scientific community. Rather than describe the position as incommensurability *tout court*, therefore, it may be more helpful say that there are contradictory premises leading to ultimately incompatible discourses; and to encourage positivists to explore the inconsistencies of their approach.

5. Constraints on certainty

Because I have already professed the pragmatic position as my favoured response to uncertainty (Introduction, §1, sixth assumption), Dewey's discussion of the term *truth* seems an appropriate point of reference for the discussion. To Dewey, truth and falsity are not qualities of the thing itself, but of our conception:

If ideas, meanings, conceptions, notions, theories, systems, are instrumental to an active reorganisation of the given environment, to a removal of some specific trouble and perplexity, then the test of their validity and value lies in accomplishing this work. If they succeed in their office, they are reliable, sound, valid, good, true. If they fail to clear up confusion, to eliminate defects, if they increase confusion, uncertainty and evil when they are acted upon, then they are false. Confirmation, corroboration, verification lie in works, consequences. Handsome is that handsome does. By their fruits shall ye know them. That which guides us truly is true - demonstrated capacity for such guidance is precisely what is meant by truth. The adverb "truly" is more fundamental than either the adjective, true, or the noun, truth. An adverb expresses a way, a mode of acting. [Dewey,1950:128]

From the description of truth offered by Dewey, then, truth is in no way dissociated from value judgements. Unfortunately, the term *truth* appears in general to be more commonly associated with a neutral transcendental claim. Common usage may have changed, or the context of the argument shifted, but, for whatever reason, use of the term *truth* might prove awkward. Because of this, the word *plausible* will be preferred here; although to anyone used to the carpenter's use of the word *true*, Dewey's interpretation should be immediately accessible.

Although sceptical pragmatism may appear persuasive when presented in this form, other incompatible epistemologies are evidently well supported. How, then, can the sustainability of scepticism be plausibly demonstrated in the face of critical challenge?

The first stage is to specify the context of the argument. Despite Zhu's reservations about distinguishing between self and environment [Zhu,1996:110], the distinction between consciousness and that of which it is conscious may be thought a legitimate starting point. Personal experience is inaccessible to others, while that which is experienced appears to have noumenal reality independently of the observer. A further step draws attention to others' consciousness. Even though we cannot experience their experience [Laing,1967:16], we commonly attribute to it qualities similar to those of our own experience.

We might therefore distinguish between three distinct ways of knowing: knowledge of private experience, knowledge of others' experience reported in language, and knowledge of material entities. More simply, we can distinguish between subjective, inter-subjective and objective knowledge.

The form of knowledge with which we are presently concerned is inter-subjective knowledge; that which is publicly constructed. The possibilities of dwelling within the world or within oneself in a state of immediate perception are relevant here only in so far as they relate to public knowledge.

In this context, objective data as sources of certainty are limited by, at least, the imperfections of our biological mechanisms, which have been documented by, *inter alia*, Maturana and Varela [1988]. Beyond this, there are the problems of selectivity and interpretation. Simply, our understandings of the raw data that are available to us depend on pre-existent conceptual maps which are personal rather than universal and necessary [Neisser, 1976; Kelly, 1969:100]. This implausibility of achieving a view from nowhere, to borrow Nagel's phrase [1986], obviously acts again as an impediment to certainty in subjective knowledge.

Furthermore, even if personal certainty were attainable, the uncertainties of language would take its translation into public knowledge beyond our compass. As Quine [1969] and others have demonstrated, there is little possibility that either the form or content of language is necessary or universal, or that relationships between symbol and referent could achieve definitive correspondence. If this is the case, not only would it preclude the reliable sharing of personal knowledge, but the project which seeks to discover necessary truth through the analysis of one or another linguistic form would also be bound to fail. (Chomsky's assumption of a universal underlying grammar recurs from time to time [eg. Flood and Romm, 1995:476], but remains conjectural. I fail to find the conjecture persuasive, for reasons which will be explored a little later.)

So far, then, three modes of knowing have been identified - the objective, the subjective, and the inter-subjective - together with four obstructions to inter-subjective certainty being attained through them.

| Mode of knowing | Obstruction to certainty |
|------------------------|--|
| Objective | Neurological unreliability (1) |
| Subjective | Partiality of interpretation (2) |
| Inter-subjective | Lack of definitive correspondence between symbols and referents (3) Lack of correspondence between linguistic form and universal structure of reality (4) |

While these obstructions are sufficient to block certainty in the discrete modes of knowing, it could still be argued that, rather than being compounding errors, they are compensatory. However generous one might wish to be, this last ditch defence of positivism would have to establish the position from which it could be demonstrated that the errors were compensatory. Predictive reliability might perform such a function, and in certain technologies can do so; yet, unless one believes that the universe is ordered into disconnected realms, prediction would have to incorporate human behaviour as well as that of material objects, if a claim of reliable access to the truth were to be sustainable; and despite the efforts of behavioural positivists such as Skinner [1977] and Ajzen and Fishbein [1980] this has not been achieved.

An outline of the case for scepticism has thus been sketched. Because of the significance of the epistemology to the identification of appropriate roles and methods for social scientists, the outline will be further explored, and challenges considered, in the two following sections. Before that is undertaken, however, a brief demonstration that the pertinent issues in the domain are being addressed seems necessary.

The first mapping of the territory used here is that of Singer [1959, *cited in* Britton and McCallion 1994]. In Singer's model, rationalism is seen as the state in which fact is a function of law, while in empiricism, law is a function of fact. This distinction replicates the idea that certain public knowledge can be derived respectively from language and from objective data, each of which positions has been, *prima facie*, refuted.

Singer completes his set by referring to epistemologies in which it is conceded that fact and law interact, but in which *a priori* propositions may or may not be acceptable. In experimentalism, according to Singer, only theory related *a posteriori* knowledge is acceptable. However, bearing in mind the uncertainty of experiential knowledge, and the postulate of compounded error, experimentalism no more leads to certainty than does any other approach. Singer's fourth category, critical science, assumes that the objective study of language allows false theory to be identified. If, however, language is not correspondent to reality in form any more than in content, scepticism remains the preferred epistemology.

Singer's early identification of critical science is interesting in that the critical systems movement habitually attributes its approach to the influence of Habermas [Flood and Jackson, 1991c]. He distinguished between the practical and technical interests of humanity, and then posited an emancipatory interest through which to identify false theory [Holub, 1991; Mansell, 1994]. A mapping onto the model used here might suggest that our practical interests relate to the intersubjective construction of knowledge in relation to ourselves, and the technical interest to the intersubjective construction of knowledge in relation to the material environment. As with Singer's analysis, Habermas' third category, critical science, seems to imply the possibility of a neutral position from which to point out the defects in others' reasoning; a position

which has already been contradicted here. Whether this was Habermas' intention or not remains a moot point. His nomination of the categories as 'quasi-transcendental' [Holub, 1991:9], and his postulation of a "unity of reason" [*ibid*:61] suggests an equivocacy about transcendence that is reminiscent of Kant, despite the pragmatism attributed to him by Holub [*ibid*:30].

Thirdly, and from a non-systemic perspective, it may be useful to remark that Rescher [1980], in a curious assault on scepticism that will be challenged later, identified three possible routes to certainty. These are intuition, rationalism, and empirical realism, which may be taken to correspond to the subjective, intersubjective and objective modes of knowing identified above.

While comfort may be taken from agreeing on the areas of concern with Singer, Habermas and Rescher, the differences of interpretation suggest that, if scepticism is to be accepted as the most plausible of positions, with all that this entails, the arguments and counter-arguments will have to be examined in greater detail.

Constraints on access to the truth

Bracketed numbers refer to the table of obstructions to certainty.

(1) The unreliability of our neural systems is probably the least controversial of the constraints on certainty that have been identified. Despite Heidegger's invaluable injunction that we should dwell in the world rather than conceive of the mind as a somehow discrete entity [eg: Floistad, 1983:6-9], there is too much evidence of the fallibility of our perceptual mechanisms to encourage the idea that our brains can be

relied on in their interpretation of neural data. (1 > 2) Even if such neural data were reliable, this would be insufficient for descriptive certainty, since descriptions of the world would inevitably have theoretical and taxonomic components [Neisser,1976].

(2) Thus the issue of the neutrality of an observer, or of the conceptual scheme through which the observer interprets their experience is central to the pursuit of descriptive certainty. As innumerable philosophers of the natural sciences have acknowledged, such neutrality is not a serious possibility. Kuhn [1970] observed that the whole system which attributes to any theory the status of scientific knowledge is dependent on a community which has interests in defending its conceptual paradigm. Lakatos [1974,1978] was notably sceptical about the manner in which a core theory could be defended; and Planck was so doubtful of the capacity of scientific communities that he suggested that

a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.....[Planck cited in Kuhn, 1970:15]

Feyerabend [1988] went still further, arguing that anything goes; the proper context of discovery is not determinable, and, as Foucault has suggested, the context of validation would seem to be a function of the variables of social power rather than of the demonstrable effectiveness of any transcendent methodology [Foucault,1988].

The underlying point can be expressed very simply: "our conceptualisations characterise us more than they characterise that to which they are supposed to refer." [Dooley, 1976:176] Similarly, from the deconstructionist perspective it is argued that "the practitioner of interpretive analytics realises that he himself is produced by what he is studying; consequently he can never stand outside it" [Dreyfus and

Rabinow, 1983 *cited in* Dávila, 1993:388]. In the less flamboyant and allusive Anglo-Saxon tradition one may refer to Ryan's assertion that "one should not think that value-freedom can always be achieved just by leaving out more and more of the significance of what is being described. The end of that road is not a neutral description but a thoroughly misleading one." [Ryan, 1981:25]

Thus the distinction between fact and value may be said to be untenable because value commitments enter into the very *assessment of evidence* by social scientists and not simply into the content of the conclusions they advance....the conceptions held by a social scientist of what constitute cogent evidence or sound intellectual workmanship are the products of his education and his place in society, and are affected by the social values transmitted by this training and associated with this social position; the values to which the social scientist is thereby committed determine which statements he accepts as well-grounded conclusions about human affairs. [Nagel, 1981:413]

Even, however, were it plausible to argue that we could suspend our interests and our preconceptions, there must be severe doubts that language operates in a fashion that would permit this to take place.

(3) Two of the problems are combined in Quine's elaboration of Wittgenstein's doubts of the feasibility of ostention. This issue is perhaps best approached obliquely, via Hollis and Lukes' argument that there must be a bridgehead of meaning [Hollis and Lukes, 1982]; that is, a set of terms which have undeniable equivalence in more than one mind. This reflects the argument offered by Winch, that

....each society has its own concepts, its own 'world', and yet they connect with each other somehow through their common confrontation with the basic facts of human life; not earth, air and fire, but birth, copulation and death - these are conceptualised by all cultures and hence we have some sort of benchmark for beginning cross-cultural dialogue. [Jarvie, 1984:101]

Examination of Hollis and Lukes' text, however, shows that their only ground for the assumption of a bridgehead is that they would otherwise be forced to accept that rationalism is insupportable; as clear an instance of preconceptions re-emerging as conclusions as one could wish to find: while Winch's assertion of the possibility of cross-cultural dialogue must be clearly distinguished from access to a transcendent truth. As Barnes and Bloor assert, there are no 'simple preceptual situations' which provide the researcher with 'standard meanings' uncomplicated by cultural variables [Barnes and Bloor, 1982:38].

In order for a bridgehead of semantic certainty to be established, and in particular to be established as undeniable, the Laingian proposition that "I do not experience your experience....your and their experience is invisible to me as mine is to you and them..." [Laing, 1967:16-17] would have to be completely discredited: without such a refutation, corroboration is impossible. Refutation does not appear to be achieved by Hollis and Lukes, nor by Winch or Jarvie. A high degree of empathy may be attainable, but intersubjective confirmation of descriptions is not, as far as we can tell. We remain with the problem that, as Quine pointed out, if the representative of another culture repeatedly points at a rabbit and utters sounds, we may reckon the sounds are associated with the rabbit, but we cannot tell whether the remark is "There's a rabbit", "Lo! rabbithood again" or "It rabbiteth". [Quine, 1969:3]

(3 > 4) Ambiguity is in no wise reduced by the extension of semantic analysis beyond correspondence - the positivist task of direct association of a single term with an identifiable entity. If, as Quine in *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* [1953] has also asserted, all terms are interpretable only in relation to each other, we may have a network of speech acts which are functionally effective [Austin, 1961], but this still cannot be equated with direct correspondence between a linguistic event and that which it purports to represent. The distinction between the analytic [*a priori*] and synthetic [*a posteriori*] statement appears to be inapplicable if the meaning of words is dependent on verbal context and environmental circumstance. No statement is part of a self-evident ahistorical conceptual scheme; and thus no statement is capable of representing a formal truth that transcends its contingent frame of reference [Quine, 1953]. In Ryle's felicitous phrase:

Meanings are not things, not even very queer things. Learning the meaning of an expression is more like learning a piece of drill than like coming across a previously unencountered object. [Ryle, *cited in* Thomson, 1981:17]

There is an outstanding issue, however. While that which is conventionally seen as language would appear to suffer from intrinsic problems as a transcendent medium, the language of logic might tempt us to believe that the limitations of our circumstances can be overcome. While content may remain ambiguous, form may represent a universal and necessary pattern.

The first stage of almost any such claim is to reduce the richness and complexity of speech to a form commensurable with a universal and necessary propositional logic; though Barnes and Bloor have quite reasonably enquired as to why this reductiveness should be persuasive [Barnes and Bloor, 1982:45]. Nevertheless, there are those who are willing to commit themselves to the logical positivist claim that any statement that is not so reducible is metaphysical nonsense; or have adopted the rationalist's equivalent posture that it is through deductive inference that we can transcend the boundaries of our situated knowledge.

Kant in many ways established the pattern for such attempts. His approach to the attainment of escape trajectory was that

....as a boundary is itself something positive which belongs both to what lies inside it and to the space which lies outside a given totality, reason partakes in real positive knowledge merely by extending itself up to this boundary, but in such a way that it does not try to go beyond this boundary, because it finds there before it an empty space in which it can indeed think forms for things but not things in themselves. [Kant, 1953:129]

It was through the primacy of logic that Kant proposed that we might transcend the boundary; but the inadequacy of this approach has long been evident, even to those who have devoted a working life to studying Kantian thought. In Paton's words:

We can afford now to smile at Kant's devotion to Formal Logic: and his defects in this matter have been so often condemned... that I need not dwell on this topic. [Paton, 1936:553]

Not everyone has attended to the warning sounded by the history of epistemology. Both Wittgenstein and Ayer were attracted by the possibility of reducing speech to a

logical format which would permit the truth or otherwise of any statement to be determined. Wittgenstein, of course, found himself completely reversing his position, while Ayer, in an introduction to a later edition of *Language, Truth and Logic* confessed his embarrassment at having produced such an over-assertive 'young man's book.' [Ayer, 1956]. Russell was also involved in these researches, but later concluded that

Truth is applicable primarily as a form of words, and only derivatively to a belief. A form of words is a social phenomenon, therefore the fundamental form of truth must be social. [Russell, 1927:273]

In a more technical vein, Kaminsky has argued convincingly against the plausibility of Chomsky's pursuit of a universal grammar, concluding that

...there is no ultimate logical form of a sentence. There is only that form we can attribute to a sentence on the basis of the logic we have available to us. More specifically, the logical form of a sentence is the form we think it would take if it were a member of a given formal logical language. It is this form that reveals to us the ontological commitments of a language, and for this reason it is really quite absurd to take seriously the Chomskian view that with sufficient study of language we shall some day find *the* universal grammar that permeates all languages. [Kaminsky, 1982:43]

Equally, in respect of logic, the futility of expecting transcendent truth from analysis of the form should be apparent from Russell's achievement of paradox "Is the set of all sets which are not members of themselves, a member of itself or not?", which was constructed while he was in pursuit of the perfect logical form; or from Gödel's proof that every formal language is of necessity either inconsistent or incomplete; and as Walsh has commented "It is not obvious how formal logic, which is a logic of

consistency, can supply a clue to what professes to be a logic of truth." [Walsh, 1967:312]

Even consistency is problematic. Hodge, for example, a professional logician, has suggested that, given that the aim of logic is to tell us in what situations a set of sentences is all true, the calculations necessary to determine the truth value of such a set would in any but the simplest circumstances be infinite, so that "only an angel or retired god could complete them." [Hodge, 1976:250]

If we are faced with choosing between a belief in an underlying universality of language or the possibility of discovering unexpected perspectives, the latter may very well seem the more plausible.

The possibility to which every tradition is always open is that the time and place may come, when and where those who live their lives in and through the language-in-use which gives expression to it may encounter another alien tradition with its own very different language-in-use and may discover that while in some area of greater or lesser importance they cannot comprehend it within the terms of reference set by their own beliefs, their own history, and their own language-in-use, it provides a standpoint from which once they have acquired its language-in-use as a second first language, the limitations, incoherences, and poverty of resources of their own beliefs can be identified, characterised, and explained in a way not possible from within their own tradition.

[MacIntyre, 1988:388]

To summarise thus far: three modes of knowing were hypothesised, with equivalent potentialities for access to the truth. Both endogenous and exogenous grounds for dismissing two of them have been presented.

Objective knowledge as a route to certainty is

- self-contradictory in that experience teaches us that appearances can be deceptive (1),
- challenged theoretically by the implausibility of asserting that any conceptual scheme is universal and necessary (2,3,4).

Inter-subjective knowledge is subject to scepticism because

- it is mediated by language; and the linguistic analysis of languages show them to be incomplete representations both in form or content - neither transparent nor directly referential (2,3,4)
- rationalism is experientially ridiculed by the repeated practical failure of schemes which assert incontestability on the grounds of deductive purity.

There remains the third option. Although subjectivity in the form of intuition has, by definition, no possibility of discursive validation, and continually demonstrates its predictive unreliability, it deserves, nevertheless, to be taken seriously.

Polanyi [1958,1967,1969] has perhaps offered the most cogent arguments for the primacy of tacit knowledge. The core of his argument can be appreciated by

integrating two propositions. The first of these is that "Our body is the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge, whether intellectual or practical." [1967:15]

The second concerns the nature of understanding; a process of comprehending, of "a grasping of disjointed parts into a comprehensive whole....We cannot comprehend a whole without seeing its parts, but we can see the parts without comprehending the whole." [1958:28,29]

The inter-relation of these components is perhaps best summarised in this extract:

We seek to clarify, verify or lend precision to something said or experienced. We move away from a position that is felt to be problematic to another position which we find more satisfying. *And this is how we eventually come to hold a piece of knowledge to be true.* Here is the tacit doing of our own,.....the unavoidable act of personal participation in our explicit knowledge of things: an act of which we can be aware merely in an unreflecting manner. And this situation appears no longer as a logical oddity. For we have seen that the kind of tacit powers by which we commit ourselves to any particular statement operate in various elaborate forms throughout the realm of human knowledge, and that it is this personal coefficient alone which endows our explicit statements with meaning and conviction. [Polanyi, 1958:26]

Thus the importance of intuition is evoked; "It is not by looking at things but by dwelling in them that we understand their joint meaning.....We can see now how an unbridled lucidity can destroy our understanding of complex matters."

[Polanyi, 1967:18] However, Polanyi's claim is quite clearly that tacit knowledge refers not to a transcendent conception of the truth, but to an idea of meaning. Essentially his position is pragmatic; to be effective we must at times re-integrate our analyses.

Language can help us to reconstruct our understanding; but there is a time to move beyond language, even if our actions will subsequently be justifiably subject to a linguistic critique. Descriptive truth is not accessible by the subjective route.

Each of the three supposed modes of access to the truth - the formal, the experiential and the intuitive - can thus be interpreted as offering necessary contributions to our understanding without any of them, severally or in combination, offering us certainty. Scepticism, in the sense of accepting the inaccessibility of truth, becomes perhaps the most tenable of epistemological positions.

6. Positivist recidivism

If the argument outlined above is taken seriously, there would seem to be a need to explain the perpetuation of more positivist epistemologies and methodologies; and given the unconvincing philosophical validation of the position, a sociological explanation may be more convincing, if less creditable to the profession.

History offers a popular perspective on the issue. The momentum engendered by the success of the positive natural sciences in their technological role seems to have been taken to indicate the possibility of the same methodology being applied to society. Positivism, sometimes in the allied form of naturalism, is perhaps most closely associated with the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; with Comte's ideal of an elite of social scientists; or Durkheim's sociological rule that "All preconceptions must be eradicated." [Durkheim, 1966:34]. However, in the words of Harré and Secord:

Only if social psychologists can be persuaded to turn their attention to life situations of which life in the laboratory is a very small and restricted part,

can justice be done to the richness and complexity of the daily life that is familiar to all of us as lay persons, and for which our language is a well-adjusted conceptual instrument. [Harré and Secord, 1972:152]

Of course, this argument can be discounted by claiming that our minds are epiphenomenal, and that the investigation of the physical brain will ultimately provide a complete explanation of knowing. These ontological grounds of reductive social science cannot be unequivocally discounted, which allows a variety of forms of positivism to persist, in the form of environmental or biological determinism. On the one hand, Skinner's claim that "The variables of which human behaviour is a function lie in the environment" [Skinner, 1977:1] still attracts some social theorists, while socio-biologists such as Maturana [1988, 1988 with Varela] and Dawkins [1976] also entice a significant number of followers.

Reductive determinism then is a distinct perspective; but it is dependent on epistemological optimism. Rorty's use of the term *commensurable* is helpful here:

By "commensurable" I mean able to be brought under a set of rules which will tell us how rational agreement can be reached on what would settle the issue on every point where statements seem to conflict. [Rorty, 1980:285]

In this sense, the reductive view of the world is commensurable with that which is expressed here, but purely hypothetical. Those who do not accept our minds (as distinct from our brains) as significant intervening variables in the explanation of human experience may agree both

- that the prediction of behaviour and of private experience would be necessary to demonstrate their case; and
- that they show no significant signs of achieving this.

Their assertions remain purely speculative, therefore, and of marginal relevance to the practical social scientist, or, indeed, to many cognitive biologists [Greenfield,1995].

The concern here is not principally with reductive determinist discourse. It is with seeking to understand the residual positivism of those who appear to accept that positivism is inappropriate to the social sciences, yet perpetuate the role implied by it. Effectively, this interim project may be taken as a search for commensurability within that set of academic discourses which accepts that social reality is in part constructed from our imaginations.

To this end, a set of rules, (or, in sceptical discourse, commitments), which are seen as underlying these discourses, may be offered. This set will be taken, in this context, to be acceptance of the grounds of scepticism: that is, we will not seek to claim that our descriptions represent a convergence on the truth by arguing

- that our physical experience gives us access to an immediate objective reality;
- that we can achieve observational neutrality;
- or that we have access to any language which is in form or content directly correspondent to reality.

If such a set of commensurability rules can be accepted, it is by reference to them that conflicting statements may be settled; or at least the dissonances identified with some precision. More particularly, the justification of practices which constitute social intervention can be clarified.

Discourses which appear to be grounded in this set might be expected to accept their implications, but there are a variety of escape routes. Four categories have been

identified here: moral panic, misrepresentation, transcendentalism, and wishful thinking.

Moral panic

One familiar and recurrent theme forms the first category: moral panic at the danger of the slide from scepticism into nihilism. Flood, for example, has argued that "In order to avoid skeptical despair, however, it is necessary to accept 'the positivist moment'..." [Flood,1990:69]; and with Romm he claims that relativism is automatically gloomy [Flood and Romm,1995:473].

Surely an additional premise is required for either statement to attain any kind of logical rigour. The proposition that *despair is the necessary consequence of failing to believe that one's knowledge is certain* would meet the case; but is such a claim credible? Can it really be attested that those who are uncertain become dysfunctional? Is it really necessary to deny uncertainty in order to avoid despair, or appropriate to try to deceive ourselves? If uncertainty is our lot, what benefits do we expect to accrue from a pretence of certain knowledge, other than temporary refuge in a fool's paradise?

Midgley has argued that "Flood's 'positivist moment' is embedded in critical practice, and is therefore as sceptical as [my] 'objective knowledge'." [Personal communication, Summer, 1997] To this I would reply that positivism is not generally understood to have any sceptical component, whereas knowledge of objects can easily encompass a sceptical perspective. There would seem to be, therefore, a problem of translation; but not one which obviates the identification of moral panic. If Midgley's reading is taken,

however, the response to moral panic is not, in this case, the complete abandonment of scepticism and critical awareness, but something more akin to their suspension.

Moral panic was also familiar to the pre-Socratic Greeks as a response to scepticism, but pragmatists from the time of Carneades, at least, have accepted that if we cannot know with certainty, there are other criteria for belief. This position will be discussed in greater detail later (Evolution of a methodology, *et seq.*). For immediate purposes it is merely appropriate to note the fallacy of the argument that fears of the consequences of embracing uncertainty should lead us to pretend that we have access to the truth.

Misrepresentation

Another popular form of epistemological escapism is the "straw man gambit" in which critics find it opportune to misrepresent scepticism in order to contradict it. For example;

The cognitive sceptic does not hold that what we think we know about the world is false. He simply maintains that our knowledge claims in this domain are unwarranted - that we inevitably lack due justification for making them." [Rescher, 1980:2]

How likely would sceptics be to accept this description of their attitude? A more perceptive expression of the sceptical position might well be to say that the sceptic

...is not just asking "How do you know?" (in a way which implies we do not, of course). The skeptic is more particular: he asks "How do you know that this, rather than that is the better hypothesis?" [Harman, 1990:150]

Simply because certainty is rejected as a reasonable criterion for belief, it cannot be inferred that no other criteria are permissible.

Rescher is hostile to scepticism, hence the exaggeration *ad absurdum*: the sceptics' assumption of uncertainty is transformed into an imputed claim that there is no reason to prefer one idea to another. Rescher then uses his elaboration to support his claim that scepticism is irrational. This manoeuvre is all the more mystifying in that Rescher appears to accept that certainty is implausible; which was all that the sceptic claimed before Rescher chose to misinterpret the position.

Transcendentalism

The third category of attempts to supercede, rather than simply deny, the sceptical case may be described as transcendental. In this set, it is usually argued that some intellectual technique allows us to step outside ourselves. Kant, as has already been illustrated, favoured this approach, and has been followed by, amongst others, Bourdieu.

Bourdieu argues for a social praxeology.

First we push aside mundane representations to construct the objective structures (spaces of *positions*), the distribution of socially efficient resources that define the external constraints bearing on interactions and representations. Second, we reintroduce the immediate, lived experience of agents in order to explicate categories of perception and appreciation (*dispositions*) that structure their action from inside. It should be stressed that, although the two moments of analysis are equally necessary, they are not equal: epistemological priority is granted to objectivist rupture over subjectivist understanding. Application of Durkheim's first principle of the "sociological method", the systematic rejection of preconceptions, must come before analysis of the practical apprehension of the world

from the subjective standpoint. For the viewpoints of agents will vary systematically with the point they occupy in objective social space.

[Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:11]

There seems, however, little plausibility in the idea that social space can be objectively defined by researchers, who are themselves agents, so that their systematic constructivist deviations can be subtracted from their conceptions. There is no starting point to make transcendence feasible, even if hard data may at times give some indication of the personal interests which could encourage particular mindsets, and be recognised as a bias in an analysis.

Wishful thinking

A fourth category that overlaps with transcendentalism could easily attract the title "wishful thinking". Habermas, for example, invoked a "kind of knowledge, critical science, that meets the need of mankind for emancipation from false theories and distorted language." [Mansell, 1994:592] This would be a splendid addition to our intellectual capacity, but the dependence on a transhistoric structure of consciousness or of language [Habermas, 1970] depends on an ability to attain ideological neutrality for which there is no evidence.

Bhaskar [1979, 1989] also seems to offer an intriguing example of this tendency. Having referred to Lukàcs' claim that "the role of philosophy is to justify and exhibit the grounds for regarding the outcome of scientific methodology as valid", he goes on to write that:

...such an exercise presupposes both a certain view of knowledge (so that it is intrinsically circular); and implicitly of the world (that is the way the

world must be for knowledge of the presumed sort to be possible)...I am going to propose a reversal in our conception of the programme of philosophy. On it one no longer implicitly makes certain extraordinary assumptions about the world ..to show the rationality of science. Rather one assumes at the outset the intelligibility of science (or rather of a few generally recognised scientific activities) and asks explicitly what the world must be like for those activities to be possible. [Bhaskar, 1979:10]

As a rescue attempt, it is reminiscent of the hero who dives into the quicksand to pull out the victim, since the circularity Bhaskar attributes to Lukàcs applies also to his own argument. He has merely entered the circle at a different point.

Distinguishing these four categories of renunciation of scepticism - moral panic, misrepresentation, transcendence, and wishful thinking - may not exhaust the attempts to shore up the notion of a positive social or systemic science. It should be recalled that reductive epistemological optimism does not come under the sway of the sceptical commitments, and may well achieve internal consistency. To those, however, who accept that social reality is in part constructed from our imaginations, such avenues are closed. Demonstrating the inconsistencies of these theories thus reinforces the proposition that where scepticism is rejected despite apparent acceptance of the grounds of scepticism, an explanation of the discursive dissonance is required.

As has been hinted, reflexive sociology may provide a persuasive answer. The recidivist epistemologies have radical implications for the permissible scope of social scientific roles. If there are methodologies that allow experts privileged access to the

truth, authority should be vested in those experts, and they need not be subject to significant judgement by others. If this is not the case, the social scientist is merely one of many participants in the construction of social reality, and their interventions cannot be justified by appeal to the superiority of their methodologies, of which they alone are guardians.

Of the conceptions supporting this perspective, the role of the Brahmin caste in India is perhaps the most accessible. According to Bose [1984], the original structure of the caste system was not predominantly hierarchical, so much as a division of labour; but those to whom is allocated the duty to preserve and extend wisdom are apt to use their authority to define their role in a more authoritative sense than the epistemology permits.

In a second example, Foucault [1988:309] would seem to have recognised a similar potential in writing of the "interplay of selection, sacralisation, and institutional validation, of which the university is both the operator and the receiver." Thirdly, there is the considered judgement of two respected professional academics:

The field of social science is replete with politicking for control over institutional resources, networking aimed at securing the support of colleagues, and the manipulation of the sources and legitimacy of knowledge and reputation. [Long and Long, 1992:39]

I am suggesting, therefore, that the positivism latent in the practice of the social sciences can be explained quite plausibly in terms of the maintenance of privilege. Others may favour the belief that social scientists can transcend the epistemic limitations which apply to other human beings, but I have yet to be persuaded by their arguments.

Amongst which band of social scientists might I then hope to find a home?

7. Looking for a home

To summarise the position:

In their practical applications and methodologies, many social and systemic scientific discourses retain the habits of their positivist origins, even though the positivist assumptions have since become largely untenable in the current discourse of epistemology. A negative conception of positivism has clear implications for what can and cannot be achieved; treating society as a descriptably predictable mechanism, for example, is not acceptable. Since descriptions are thought to be partial, but also function as an intervening variable in human behaviour, the researcher may be perceived as intervening in the construction of social institutions.

One might continue by arguing that a lack of epistemological validation of positivism could be ethically redeemed if it could be demonstrated that the outcomes arising from such claims were beneficial. An alternative view, which approximates to my position, is that if we seek consequential good, we must accept that the form taken by society is to be directed by participative, hermeneutic and heuristic processes. A general case for this perspective can be culled from ideas put forward by, amongst others, Greenberg [cited by Levin], Buckley, Cohen, Sears and Machiavelli.

The Levin/Greenberg argument for participation is that:

- it improves performance by increasing commitment;
- from the perspective of humanistic psychology, participation is essential to mental health;

- democracy is morally inescapable;
- and that participation is a pre-requisite of social change. [Levin, 1994]

On this last issue, Buckley uses Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety to suggest that, in order to be adaptive - to accept the implications of the assumption that social structure is "an heuristic tool rather than a substantial social entity" [Buckley, 1981:186] - it is necessary to nurture non-pathological deviance. That conformity and uniformity are inadequate, and by implication that participation is essential, is supported in particular by reference to three claims.

Firstly, Cohen argued that the political system should be seen as

a circular feedback loop whereby superiors continuously modify their standards or expectations as definitions of political objectives change, and subordinates adapt their decisions and performances to these changing expectations and surrounding circumstances, which in turn changes the states of the situation toward which superiors are acting.

[Buckley, 1981:196]

Secondly, in Sear's words:

Whether the group's behaviour is dealt with as antecedent and the individual's as consequent, or vice versa, the two kinds of event are so commonly mixed in causal relationships that it is impractical to conceptualise them separately. [Sears, *cited in* Buckley, 1981:190]

Thirdly, it has been argued that

.... a republic has a fuller life and enjoys good fortune for a longer time than a principality, since it is better able to adapt itself to diverse

circumstances owing to the diversity found among its
citizens.....[Machiavelli, The Discourses, III.9, *circa* 1515]

Other views are possible, of course; but perhaps these perspectives may prove persuasive in the light of the ontological, moral and epistemological commitments expressed here. In seeking a home for my research, therefore, a commitment to participation and emancipation would seem to be crucial indicators of an acceptable research method; and the methodologies which seem to fall most readily within this remit are those of action research and of the soft and critical systems sciences.

Whether appropriate methodological guidance for this particular research project can be found within this set is less readily assertible.

Systems sciences

Systems thinking is a diverse field. The argument for general system theory, though the term is most strongly associated with von Bertalanffy [1968], is perhaps most accessible through Laszlo's set of propositions:

Coherent and systematic theories of the empirical world are based on two
primary assumptions:

1. That the world exists;

and

2. The world is at least in some respects intelligibly ordered (open to
rational enquiry).

These are the secondary propositions;

(i) the world is intelligibly ordered in special domains

or

(ii) the world is intelligibly ordered as a whole. [Laszlo, 1972:8]

If the second of the secondary propositions is accepted, there is a strong case for seeking a language or set of concepts which is transferable between academic disciplines, and in many respects this is at the heart of systemic thought.

The precise identification of such a set of concepts is, hardly surprisingly, not easily attainable, and there should be no confusion between a transdisciplinary terminology and the idea of a universal language that directly corresponds to the truth.

Nevertheless, within the systems field a variety of tenets tend to be accepted as fundamental. These include the ideas of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts; the convenience of selecting boundaries which define systems in such a way as to allow study and intervention; the recognition that any system, saving only the universe and all that therein is, must be considered as an element in a hierarchy of systems; multicausality; and inter-disciplinarity [Carter *et al*, 1984].

Other elements of systems thinking are only slightly more controversial, although acceptance of their significance is not necessarily matched by agreement as to how we should respond. The significance of control, for example, tends to be accepted, even if Wiener's claim is not necessarily transferable to social circumstances: "...what cybernetics offers is the framework on which all individual machines may be ordered, related, and understood." [cited in Checkland, 1981:34] Social systems are not always best seen as machines. In that context, however, communication is probably an essential element of analysis [Watson, 1984:32-39; Checkland, 1981:35].

Another aspect of the systemic view has been well summarised by Checkland in his persistent warnings against confusing "a possibly plausible description of perceived

reality, with perceived reality itself" [Checkland and Scholes, 1990:21]; but this view is contested. Not all systemists accept that "There will...never be a single (testable) account of a human activity system, only a set of possible accounts all valid according to particular *Weltanschauungen*." [Checkland, 1981:14] .

Modernism within systems theory

The critical systems school, for example, often appears to follow Habermas into the transcendentalist illusion.

The exact nature of modernism is open to debate, but in this case it appears to be an acceptance of the necessity of a hermeneutic or interpretive analysis, combined with an assumption that positivism can encompass such a dynamic. Mansell has summarised this position with considerable clarity:

The work of Habermas, however, arguably does provide a coherent framework that reconciles apparently opposed paradigms via the notion of cognitive interests and the different forms of knowledge to which they give rise. Habermas argues that knowledge serves human interests in manipulating the environment and cooperating with others. This technical and practical interest gives rise to two different forms of knowledge, each with its own criterion of validity. Thus positivism and functionalism in the social sciences can be reconciled with phenomenology and hermeneutics. Methods of enquiry appropriate to one interest, however, must not be misapplied to the domain of the other[*there is also a need for*] a third kind of knowledge, critical science, that meets the need of mankind for emancipation from false theories and distorted language.

[Mansell, 1994:592]

Reasons for doubting the feasibility of this project have already been offered. Firstly, the idea that we can distinguish between completely discrete areas of knowledge is opposed to Laszlo's proposition of an integrated universe, which has been adopted here. Secondly, the search for a tool that can perform this task cannot be taken to imply that such transcendent knowledge is available. Furthermore, and still more crucially, the aim of the critical systems school is emancipation [Flood,1993], yet it is unclear how much their project would contribute to this commendable aim unless Habermas is rigorously screened through a sceptical sieve.

This does not always happen. A flavour of the danger may be gained from the interpretation of Habermas as having asserted that "post-modernism is clearly an obfuscatory strategy designed to protect existing power structures" [Mansell, 1994:592]. This is an interesting approach. To describe post-modernism simply as a strategy is surely to take the part for the whole. If someone is choked with a cucumber, would it be appropriate to categorise cucumbers principally as weapons? There may be those who are delighted to encourage scepticism, relativism and post-modernism as supportive of a policy of divide and rule, or as an obfuscation of the dominant power relations in society; but, equally, sceptical thought may have its roots in the rigorous analysis of the possibilities of human epistemology.

I would argue, contrariwise, that the effect of replacing doubt with an assumption of the accessibility of certain truth is likely to contribute to the concentration of power in society. To replace a secular elite with the dominance of a positivist academic elite who alone are qualified to tell us what we really mean is hardly emancipatory; but if deconstruction were taken to be an exact science, the likelihood is that linguistic

interpretation would become a domain of authoritative expertise. Others would claim to know better than ourselves what our words intended.

From the sceptical perspective, the notion of false consciousness should not lead us to the assumption that there are those who are blessed with the capacity to identify specific instances of its occurrence, or of its absence. Is it reasonable to claim, for example, that

The very act of participating in a discourse, of attempting to come to an agreement about the truth of a problematic statement or the correctness of a problematic norm, carries with it the supposition that a genuine agreement is possible. If we did not suppose that a justified consensus was possible and could in some way be distinguished from a false consensus, then the very meaning of discourse, indeed of speech would be called into question. [McCarthy *cited in* Forester, 1983:239]

A premise of such a supposition would seem to be that we would only use speech if we knew it to be a perfect tool, for which there appears to be no grounds whatsoever. This response to the imperfections of communication seems to me no more helpful than its diametric opposite; that of Cratylus who "found the whole matter so distressing that he thought it best to stop talking altogether and simply waggle his finger." [Hodge, 1976:27]

Preference may be given to the belief that there is no transcendent position that would allow us to subtract our prejudices. Any claim of such transcendent ability could also be thought to represent the anti-emancipatory role described by Foucault as arising when "an individual or social group manages to block a field of relations of power, to render them impassive and invariable, and to prevent all reversibility of movement." [Foucault, 1984:3]

By contrast, Foucault's own interpretive dynamic may be described as the attempt "to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently." [Foucault *cited in* Dávila, 1993:402-3] Scepticism is at home with such a project, and with the Foucaultian position expressed by Valero-Silva:

While Habermas acknowledges a bifurcation of reason, that since it only occurred once can be rectified, Foucault assumes that reason is in a constant process of bifurcation in some way or another. [Valero-Silva, 1995:188]

Is Valero-Silva another who misinterprets the Habermasian projection of the unity of reason as an attainable end, or does he accurately reflect the ambiguity of critical thought?

In full recognition of the contribution made within systems thinking to the significance of power relations, and of the variety of opinions and ideas within the school, the emancipatory sceptic may well experience critical system thinking as a dogmatic strait-jacket. This does not make a comfortable home, however pleasant it may be to have those who are both sceptical and critical as neighbours.

Pragmatism and the critical systems school

Just as I am comfortable amongst sceptics, so I am at ease among pragmatists; but since there appears to be some confusion surrounding what is meant by pragmatism, a brief history of the word may be helpful.

In the first place, it should be noted that although Peirce coined the word *pragmatism* in 1878, the notion that in the absence of certainty we should refer to the apparent utility of holding an idea was expressed by Carneades several thousand years ago. Secondly, Peirce was concerned with expressing a theory of meaning, rather than precisely with a theory of knowledge. The extension of the term to its epistemological function may be attributed to Dewey and William James. However, since each agreed that we come no closer to the truth than through the responsible examination of the available evidence, and that science is a guide to action rather than a process of convergence on the truth, the core implications of the term seem to be relatively straightforward. They might be stated thus:

Certainty is beyond us, so that the criterion for holding to a description or explanation of ourselves or our environment is utility. The evidence that we may consider ranges from intuitive subjective report, via intersubjective constructions, to the observation of phenomena. None of this evidence is entirely reliable, but none of it should be disregarded.

Does this construction preclude my sharing a home with those who appear to dismiss pragmatism? In the instance of the critical systems school I have sometimes thought so.

Their position is neither as unequivocal or stable as may sometimes appear, however. Indeed, some critical theorists appear to be sceptical pragmatists. Midgley, for example, claims that "Reality is constituted by objective phenomena...many subjectivities....and power." [Midgley, 1992:160] Although a fully-fledged sceptic might be more cautious in the use of the term *reality*, there is a clear parallel between the two positions. Phenomena and subjectivity are shared elements. That element which

is constituted by power sounds not dissimilar to intersubjective construction, which should, indeed, always be open to critical analysis.

Sometimes, then, the hostility of critical theorists to pragmatism appears to be misplaced. Several explanations are available. Some of those who describe themselves as pragmatists believe that any challenge to the *status quo* is dysfunctional, and there are also those who describe themselves as pragmatists on the grounds that they are opposed to too much fancy thinking; but a carefully elaborated epistemological position cannot be reasonably dismissed simply because its terminology has been co-opted by those who have not considered its full implications.

To avoid any further confusion, then, let two points be made explicit about the use of the term *pragmatist* in this thesis. Firstly, that although pragmatism is opposed to rationalism, to conflate it on this ground with atheoretical empirical realism is an extraordinarily crude dependence on oppositional thinking [Flood and Jackson, 1991a:322]. Peirce took pains to distance the pragmatic approach from an ill-considered faith in one's reflex responses:

I purposely slur over many points, in order to give emphasis to one special recommendation, namely to make a systematic study of the conceptions out of which philosophical theory may be built...[Peirce, 1958:145]

Obscurity thus enshrouds Flood and Jackson's claim that pragmatism is anti-theory because

It fails to recognise that learning can only take place if practice (successful or otherwise) can be related back to a set of theoretical

presuppositions which are being consciously tested through that practice.

[Flood and Jackson, 1991a:322]

Secondly, pragmatism, as a serious epistemology that is derived from a sceptical position, is necessarily critical: disposed to question, in all cases, how theory and power might have distorted the evidence of the utility of any intervention. If there are those who are amoral in their use of pragmatic conceptions, who use it only to serve their own interests by serving the interests of the powerful, that is not an epistemological issue that devalues pragmatism. Indeed, the need for critical awareness is evident in many of the works of the early pragmatists. Dewey, for example, argued such a case in relation to the beliefs that influence behaviour in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* [1920]; and Peirce wrote of the Reformation as a process of sceptical emancipation from dogma in *The Place of Our Age in the History of Civilisation*. Fuenmayor is well wide of the mark when he states that

Pragmatism is the closing of opportunities for unconcealment (as unnecessary), and therefore unconcealment is precluded by pragmatism.

[Fuenmayor,1991]

Pragmatism, then, is emphatically not an atheoretical epistemology, nor is it essentially opposed to critical challenges to established authority. Indeed, because of its sceptical roots, it is fundamentally directed towards a practical analysis of where power lies in any circumstances. If associated with a cynical self-interested perspective it may become amoral; but this attitude is far from being a prerequisite of pragmatism, and the traditions of academic pragmatism are clearly directed towards emancipatory objectives.

Unhappily, therefore, critical systems thinking doesn't seem to offer a home for the sceptical pragmatist, even if we might feel comfortable sharing a suburb. Working from my commitments, I seek a heuristic, hermeneutic approach to intervention.

Nor does Checkland's soft systems approach meet my requirements. If one imagines a hierarchy of abstraction, Checkland's ideas tend to fall into levels which are either too specific or too general for my purposes. At one level what he offers is predominantly a technique for intervention where the actors are largely predefined with at least loosely circumscribed objectives within an organisational setting. At another, his sceptical pragmatism is congenial without offering guidance on method in contexts other than those with which he is concerned.

There are other approaches. Bignell and Fortune [1983] have developed a system of comparison with idealised models known as the failures method. This has its uses, but is essentially designed for intellectual analysis; it may be consultative, but it does not appear to be participative. One might also consider Viable Systems Methodology and Living Systems Theory; but the former appears to me to be too functionalist, despite Beer's disclaimers [Beer, 1994], and the latter too descriptively prescriptive [Bailey, 1994:626]. Each of these and other systemic approaches contributes something to a method for cognitive intervention without meeting my needs: that is, without offering a coherent methodological framework within which to design a contextually specific method for my particular purposes.

Action research

Happily, however, there is a related school of thought which explores similar methodological themes: action research, which, while not a monolithic phenomenon, may be seen as the practical application of a pragmatic epistemology [Levin,1996:9]. Both pragmatism and AR (with some exceptions) are concerned with the role of the stakeholder in any intervention, rather than with an intellectual elite exposing an inaccessible truth

A shared concern with the uses and abuses of power, especially in the construction of knowledge, is encouraging. In addition, Susman's writings on AR, for example, are very clearly identified with pragmatic philosophy, as is evident from the statement that "I follow John Dewey in assuming that knowledge is a human artifact created as a means for coming to terms with the world as well as creating it" [Susman, 1983:97], and in his use of a research methodology which is explicitly based on Dewey's steps for reflective thinking: diagnosis, action planning, action taking, evaluating, and learning [*ibid*:102].

Action research, and in particular those branches which emphasise participation, or co-generation sound quite welcoming, therefore, and a territory that is well worth exploring. Given the premises, however, it is hardly surprising to find some strange bedfellows.

Some, such as Susman, seem to favour a formalised methodology: for example, he suggests that it is necessary for an effective problem solving-group to reach consensus on how their reality is defined [*ibid*:103] and favours a fairly structured approach to all that the interdependence of social and technical systems [*ibid*: 98] may

be taken to imply. Not all action researchers are committed to such an approach, however. Reason and Heron, for example, are considerably less prescriptive, restricting themselves essentially to a proposed methodological paradigm.

Co-operative enquiry is probably the clearest methodological expression of all the forms of collaborative enquiry. While we have much confidence in this approach... we would not wish it to become a new orthodoxy.

[Reason and Heron,1995]

With such a viewpoint, I feel at home. Their approach to method is a close kin to that which will be discussed later: the offering of conceptual tools which are believed to be of value. While not explicitly sceptical, they clearly eschew the possibility of an authoritative intellectual elite. Not all AR follows this pattern, however. Positivist recidivism seems intent on invading every territory.

Some theorists, for example, seek to colonise action research through the adoption of a Habermasian division of knowledge which can be used to justify the imposition of an elite view on the structure of any problem. The division of action research into the three domains of technical, practical and emancipatory [Carr and Kemmis, 1983] has led to the facilitator's role being described in the first two fields, respectively, as an outside expert and as a Socratic manipulator. Although in the third domain the facilitator's role is described as process moderator, there is throughout an implicit assumption that emancipation from tradition, self-deception and coercion is dependent on the superior conceptions of an outside expert [Perry and Zuber-Skerrit,1990].

Questions therefore have to be asked about the claim that

only emancipatory action research can unequivocally fulfil the minimal requirements for action research...[which includes the requirement of]

participation and collaboration in all phases of the research activity. [Carr and Kemmis, 1983:7]

Firstly, are they equating emancipatory action research with critical research? and, secondly, if so, is it to be taken that emancipation is only to be achieved by pursuing a process which they determine? There must certainly be fears of such a tendency. They appear to reproduce the critical positivism evident in Flood and Jackson's claim for an authoritative position within systemic action research:

In seeking to establish itself as the new dominant paradigm, therefore, critical systems thinking demonstrates that earlier systems approaches are all special cases with limited domains of application; [Flood and Jackson, 1991b:2].

In either case, there seems to be the implication that the Habermasian position itself is exempt from the limitations which are inevitable in all other perspectives. (At a recent conference near Scunthorpe there was reason to suppose that the critical systems school has become decreasingly positivist. Unfortunately the welcome realignment of this group of researchers is too recent to be analysed thoroughly in this thesis. [see Wilby, 1996])

Again, positivism seems to lead towards the contradictory subsumation of emancipatory processes to a set of rules determined by an elite who alone are the proper judges of when those rules are being followed and the proper objectives achieved. Given the commitments that have been made here, emancipation through participation is likely to be understood in a rather different light.

Participation

Levin, I am happy to say, seems very close to sharing my view of the relationship between emancipation and participation.

The point is to support a process by which people can develop the skills necessary to formulate questions leading to an enquiry based on their own logic. [Levin,1994:29]

As with Freire [1972], the crucial element is that meaning is constructed not according to either technical or procedural presuppositions of a political or intellectual elite, but through the voluntary acceptance of a facilitative actor, whose attainments are locally assessed.

Neither Freire nor anyone else, however, can disclaim completely the exercise of power except by becoming totally passive. If we act, we intervene; and if we intervene purposefully, we exercise power. However, confusions always seem to arise from the indeterminacy of any analysis of power relations, perhaps especially in relation to the construction of knowledge; a phenomenon well illustrated by a variety of beliefs expressed in the field of development studies.

Ostrom [1990:20] and Biot *et al* [1993:62] argue for the practical necessity of incorporating local knowledge into the corpus of scientific theory, but in each case the aim seems to be only to make allowance for local variation. The indigenous and exogenous knowledge do not appear to be of equal status. Alternatively, Mascarenhas *et al* claimed that commitment to change stemmed from ownership, which was in turn dependent on all methods being developed and adapted in the field [Mascarenhas *et al*, 1991:11,45]. Professional competition seems to play a significant role in such judgements. Long and Long, for example, appeared to be staking a claim to discovery

of the actor-oriented enquiry as recently as 1992, which seems rather surprising. In the same academic field, the term *populism* has been thrown around as a useful perjorative, despite quite reasonable warnings about the incoherence of debate on the issue [Worsley, 1989:197,213]. Often this seems to reflect the curious perspective that "I am a facilitator, you are a participative researcher, and they are manipulative" [Villareal, 1992:265 on Chambers, 1989]; which would only seem to reinforce the notion that none of us has a view from nowhere.

All in all, the gatekeepers of participative methods do not seem to have been able to agree any very clear standards by which others can abide. To many this may be less surprising than that they believe that ideal speech is possible. Even if there were no other reasons, it must surely be apparent that scale and complexity act as a constraint on the extent to which co-generation can take place. If we add to this the need for creativity and the sceptical assumption that we would not know even if we had achieved perfect participation, then equity in social construction would seem more identifiable in the avoidance of abuse than in a definitive model of process.

A distinction that has emerged here as crucial in this context, then, is between those who seek to reinforce their conceptual authority and those who seek to participate equitably in the construction of knowledge. We cannot avoid starting with some conviction or commitment. We can, however, avoid constructing a basic set of commitments which privilege our knowing. in Freire's words:

....this view of education starts with the conviction that it cannot present its own programme but must search for this programme dialogically with the people it serves, to introduce the pedagogy of the oppressed, in the development of which the oppressed must participate. [Freire, 1972:95]

Or in those of Reason and Rowan:

.....we have to learn to think dialectically, to view reality as a process, always emerging through a self-contradictory development, always becoming; knowing this reality is neither subjective nor objective, it is both wholly independent of me and wholly dependent on me. [Reason and Rowan, *cited in* Reason and Heron, 1995:125]

The degree of participation thus appears to be a function of the status attributed to the interventionist's conceptual frameworks. One might suggest that if an intervention is simply the algorithmic application of a methodology, it cannot even be properly described as research; it is *consultancy* [*cf* Thomas and Lockett, 1991:100]. If there is consultancy in which there is a possibility of the intervening discourse being significantly amended in view of what is learned during the intervention, this may be viewed as *research*. For a research process to be duly labelled *co-operative enquiry*, or *co-generative research* I would argue that the conceptual framework would have to arise without the beliefs of any of the participants being given exceptional status. From this perspective, *pace* Levin, the social scientist is by definition excluded from co-generative research, except when acting in an entirely unprofessional capacity.

Such a suggestion is probably unwelcome. Nevertheless, the way in which an ideal of humility may lead to the concealment of special status can be illustrated by two examples in which power appears to be used to conceal itself.

The first example arises from Russell and Ison's claim that

communication in the constructivist's view creates our social world. It is neither a transfer nor sharing of information but a process in which knowledge which will lead to action is created by the joint involvement of both parties.... [Russell and Ison, 1991:1047]

What is missing from this theoretically derived belief is the recognition that

The terms in which the world is understood are social artifacts, products of historically situated interchanges amongst people. [Gergen and Davis, 1985:5]

Knowledge is not created *ex nihilo*, but involves negotiation between representatives of pre-existent perspectives, which take place in an environment of socially determined power relations.

An interpretation of Foucault could be used to support Russell and Ison's vision, but it seems decidedly partial, depending as it does on an exclusive focus on the micro-political relations, and deflecting attention from the juridico-legislative [macro-political] institutions. Is this a reasonable interpretation, or does it act counter to Foucault's apparently emancipatory intentions?

Dávila informs us that Foucault suggested that "in political thought and analysis, we have still not cut off the head of the king." [Dávila, 1993:384; cf Foucault, 1984:63] If this is taken to imply that we have no need to take account of existing power structures, the bucolic egalitarianism of Arnsperg and Ison's [1995] 'village green' metaphor for the academic department to which they belong might be perceived as harmless. Since, however, the department in question conforms largely to a hierarchical structure in the allocation of roles, privileges, membership and resources, the metaphor appears particularly inadequate. Foucault may have drawn attention to

the way in which power acted through personal relations, [Foucault, 1991:247], but his point was to emphasise the positive as well negative aspects of power. He clearly recognised institutionalised differentials as significant. Consider, for example, his references to the priesthood, the French Communist Party, and the academic establishment [eg. *ibid* 247, 52-53]. In Ison and Arnson's metaphor, contrariwise, the critical analysis of structured power relations is implicitly excluded, and the imposition of the rules of participation in the construction is obscured. Power of definition is used to conceal the exercise of political power.

To move to the second example of this phenomenon, Maturana's use of biological reductionism to privilege his superficially egalitarian discourse is both more blatant and more subtle. He claims that

...every process of cognition is necessarily based on the organism as a unity and on the operational closure of its nervous system...all knowing is doing as sensory-effector correlations in the realms of structural coupling in which the nervous system exists. [Maturana, 1988:166]

Even if this appears reductive, some see no problem, since it leads to an apparently emancipatory conclusion - "the choreography of co-existence" - in which no-one has transcendent knowledge [Maturana and Varela;1988:248,245]. Maturana explicitly disclaims any "search for a single ultimate explanation for anything" in his work [Maturana, 1988:31].

The tone of voice, however, is less reassuring:

if the reader has followed *seriously* what was said in these pages, he will be impelled to look at everything he does...as a world brought forth in co-existence with other people through the mechanisms we have described [Maturana and Varela, 1988:239, *original italics, emphasis added*]

That which was said in those pages can be summarised quite simply: because consciousness is constituted in biological structural coupling [Maturana,1988:234], knowledge must have a biological explanation [Maturana and Vareia,1988:25].

Such circular reasoning is, of course, consistent, but to be plausible the premises need support from outside. There seems, however, to be nothing more closely reasoned than that

the observer explicitly accepts that....his or her cognitive abilities as an observer are biological because they are altered when his or her biology is altered [Maturana, 1988:29];

which I find no more convincing than an assertion that Pavarotti's abilities are mechanical because he would make a different noise if he were to be spread flat by a steam roller.

We can safely ignore the claim that knowledge must have a biological explanation, then, if we want to. Other neuro-biologists seem to have no difficulty in accepting that while there may be correlations between brain states and reports of subjective experience, the empirical discourse cannot assimilate and explain mental phenomena [Greenfield, 1995]. Nor does avoiding the extreme of solipsism [Maturana and Varela,1988:134] force us into biologism. "Man need not be degraded to a machine by being denied to be a ghost in the machine." [Ryle,1963:310] Furthermore, we do not have to accept the implications of Maturana's contention that "...love is a fundamental biological phenomenon..." [Maturana,1991:89] or "a stepping stone to operational coherences of social life.." (Maturana and Varela,1988:247).

Biology is used authoritatively to show that cognitive authority is insupportable; but no account of the researcher given within the thesis supports the authority claimed for the

thesis, despite the agreed necessity of doing so [Foerster,1993; Maturana,1988;27].
The message is irreconcilable with the medium; but the medium is the covert
message.

In neither of these two instances are the motives of the researchers to be impugned.
Nevertheless, in each case the authority of the researcher is covertly asserted. In the
first example, the power to control the conceptual framework is used to conceal that
power; in the second, acceptance of the conclusions implicitly confers special status
on biology and the biologist - or to this particular school within biology.

Not that I can suggest a way of escaping this dilemma; but i cannot believe that to
deny the existence of the problem is conducive to the attainment of genuine
participation.

If not perfection, then good practice

Although we cannot deny the special status of the interventionist, perhaps it can be
justified.

I certainly would not wish to claim that there is no element of expertise in participative
research. To hold the view that no intervention is any more skilled than any other
would seem to set it apart from every other human activity. Only from an extremely
mechanistic viewpoint could it be supposed other than that we are disparate creatures,
with different dispositions and varying abilities.

What then constitutes good practice among expert interventionists? If we assume that it involves particular personal skills as well as respect for the varied contributions others have to offer, there are two distinct categories of criteria; participation in open discussion, and exceptional skill in techniques of conceptualisation.

These are clearly in opposition to each other, and an internal tension may also be identified with respect to expertise. Understanding is often expensively acquired, and not to be casually dismissed; but nor is it to be complacently hallowed. The habit of challenge would appear to be essential to avoid stagnation: the maintenance of valued conceptual frameworks has to be balanced against the need for continuous learning.

Checkland and Scholes [1990:16], and Flood and Jackson [1991a:322] appear to be in agreement on this issue. They all argue that learning is only possible relative to an explicit intellectual framework. This, however, would seem to be an analytic proposition, offering a particular definition of *learning*. What of craft skills, for example? Nevertheless, their definition would appear to be useful as a description of an important form of learning, as long as the framework as well as the content is open to adaptation in the light of experience; and, indeed, because of changing circumstances. In Polanyi's words:

Man's capacity to think is his most outstanding attribute. Whoever speaks of man will therefore have to speak at some stage of human knowledge. This is a troublesome prospect. For the task seems to be without end: as soon as we had completed one such study, our subject matter would have been extended by this very achievement. We should now have to study the study that we had just completed, since it, too, would be a work of man. And so we should have to go on reflecting ever again on our last

reflections, in an endless and futile endeavour to comprise completely the works of man. [Polanyi, 1958;11]

Our knowledge is partial not only because of our limitations, then, but because our research changes that which we study; a variation of Heisenberg's principle. If we are to claim expertise in conceptualisation, we must be ready to deny that which we have previously asserted.

We are thus faced, as interventionists, with two irresolvable stresses. We must value each contribution as equally valid, while recognising that they are almost certainly not of equal value; and we must introduce our ideas to others with conviction, even though we must doubt those ideas.

Given these tensions, no decree seems likely to define good practice in expert intervention. Certain abuses can be identified, some virtues praised, and my own and others' ideas on the subject will be explored recurrently throughout the thesis. No firm conclusion will be reached, however. The balance between expertise and participation, and between respect for theorised experience and for genuine innovation are contingent upon a set of variables that includes scale, location, specificity, history, urgency, and the beliefs and abilities of the people involved.

Nevertheless, some structure is necessary, even if, in such circumstances, it would be wildly optimistic to expect to find a ready made research method to guide me through an unusual project. Some criteria lying between the very general expressions of abstract theory and the algorithms of specific technique would have been helpful. Unfortunately the only nearly credible instance of such guidance I have come across has been Mldgley's criterial triad of *improvement*, *critical awareness*, and

methodological pluralism [1995]; which was published too late for me, and with which I disagree on several issues (see '*A brief validation of the criteria*', following).

Happily, the value of a multiplicity of methods is not a contentious point between Midgley and myself, even if we seem to disagree about the possibility of a unitary meta-methodology. My preference is for accommodation rather than uniformity, so that while seeking to be intelligible and to appear rational to significant others, I have had no qualms about developing my own methodology in response to the problems that I perceive. Many others explicitly support heterodoxy of method; to name but four, Reason and Heron [1995:142] have already been quoted, and Taket and White [1995:1057] will be. Folks like us can be good neighbours, even if we don't want to share a house.

8. Evolution of a methodology

Paradigms and persuasion

Scepticism by its very nature does not tell you what you can do. It is more a recognition of certain parameters of the possible and permissible, principal amongst which is this: that if none of us is certain, no-one has peculiar authority over the knowledge on which interventions are based, nor over the adaptations of knowledge which may constitute an intervention, nor control of the procedures through which knowledge and decisions are formed. If our involvement is as some form of social scientist, rather than as an intrinsic member of the community, we are making a distinctive, and possibly authoritative, contribution, whether it be to content or to process. While we cannot be neutral, we can be honest, and while we cannot dispense with our status, we can go some way towards sharing our authority.

Honesty should compel us to admit that we are intervening, and that we are entering an area of decision specifically for that purpose. We don't just happen to be there. Although our intervention may take other forms, the general case would seem to be that we are seeking to facilitate change in the conceptions people have of their circumstances, and thus of their responses. We may prefer to focus on the decision-making process, rather than the subject of that process, but either way we are putting forward a particular cognitive framework.

One of the ways of doing so is the use of paradigms. The term *paradigm* is used here in its purest form in the sense of an abstracted ideal type [Kuhn,1975] and may be thought of as

- a proposition, not necessarily in verbal form, that cannot be tested empirically, but that can be used to generate empirical propositions;
- not a representation of reality, but a heuristic and hermeneutic device; neither valid nor invalid, but more or less useful;
- transdisciplinary, adaptable, and holistic, and with the capacity to be integrated with other paradigms;
- transcultural, and applicable from an individual to a global scale

[Brauer, 1993a; Watson,1984;Conway,1989:77]

The term *paradigm* is not, however, easily contained. As Kuhn found, it has a tendency to leak out.

The principal variant used here might be described as the illustrated paradigm. Here an essentially abstract notion is clothed in familiar garments for the sake of accessibility and ease of internalisation. Jesus is reputed to have made much use of this technique. The principle expressed by the parable of the good Samaritan is paradigmatic. It is only the narrative circumstances that locate the idea in space and time; so let us here use the term *parable* to refer to an illustrated paradigm.

The other usage which may arise comes from the capacity of human beings to become locked into a paradigm, whereupon the more appropriate term may be *mind-set* or *weltanschauung* [worldview]. That which could be a conceptual tool becomes an inescapable framework of understanding.

In practice, the pure paradigm and its offspring are rarely clearly distinguishable. Because of this, some work may be required of the reader to decide when a reference to a paradigm is to its most abstract manifestation, and when it has become adulterated by illustration or dogmatism.

That a paradigm should be open to adulteration may be essential if it is to offer a resolution to the stress between expertise and participation. The expert proposes possible ways of thinking about an issue, but the actors select and adapt; but for this process to take place it may be necessary both to clothe the paradigm and to act, at least temporarily, as a zealot on its behalf.

At first glimpse, then, paradigmatic intervention seems compatible with the commitments expressed here, but more precise criteria of practice are still required. We are presumably seeking to persuade others, without coercion, to consider the adoption (and adaptation) of a way of seeing the world. Where the intervention is very

local, this may involve no more than being perceived as a welcome contributor to the process of construction surrounding others' affairs. In other instances, there may be a case to seek consent for comprehensive authority; a boat run by a committee in a force 8 gale brings happy grins only to the faces of sharks and loss adjusters.

In either case, or any in between, non-coercive persuasion depends, as Carneades noted, on the perceived usefulness of a proposed way of looking at the world. Utility is the aim of intervention; and, to be consistent with the commitments expressed here, gentle persuasion of an idea's utility is the method. For practical purposes, however, *utility* offers too little guidance. Subordinate criteria are required, and these will eventually be expressed, as *legitimation*, *validation*, which relate to persuasiveness, and *justification*, which relates to outcomes.

Introduction to the subordinate criteria

Understanding may always emerge from a cycle between theory and experience, but to describe the whole iterative process is impractical. The presentation of an idea may not, therefore, replicate its genesis. Here the emergence of an understanding is presented as though the cycle began at the experiential level, and ended with a comparison to a widely respected paradigm of action research; that which redefines the cycle between theory and experience in terms of planning, action and reflection.

It is well within the remit of action or systemic researchers to begin with a brainstorm, so let the extensive and complex process through which beliefs surface be described in these terms.

From the participative perspective *accessibility* leaps to mind as an important criterion. Without access to the content, form, and sometimes concealed assumptions of a discourse, joint ownership of our socially constructed conceptual frameworks is impossible.

Accessibility might appear to be unqualified as a virtue in this context, if it were not that it necessarily conflicts with certain benefits of specificity. We cannot, for example, expect the stress capacity of metals to be defined in a manner appropriate to building bridges without mathematical calculations which are not a universally acquired technique. While some might argue that this is not relevant to social construction, social decisions are intermingled with technological possibilities and constraints in the perspective that prevails here. For this reason, accessibility cannot always predominate at the expense of expertise and *precision*.

Another subordinate criterion might be drawn to our attention by the familiar saying that "an expert is someone who knows more and more about less and less." There is apparently a trade off between the scope of a proposition and its efficacy in specific instances. An epistemological commitment doesn't offer us detailed help on how to find our way from Scunthorpe to Kirby-in-Ashdale; but, equally, when we assess the plausibility of any information on the subject, we intuitively bring into play a range of epistemological, ontological, historical, psychological and linguistic theories of considerable scope in order to evaluate the usefulness of the specific answer that has been offered to us. As a rule of thumb, it seems possible to accept the

Susman/Polanyi doctrine - "Knowledge is gained dialectically by proceeding from the whole to the parts and back again." [Susman, 1983:99; Polanyi, 1967]. *Scope* and *specificity* are then useful criteria in support of utility.

Participation and collaboration also seem to imply a need for a measure of *commensurability*. To take the simplest reason, we need to share a map in order to be able work together; "the more my definitions of the situation overlap those of the social system members, the more will their actions be understood by me." [Susman, 1983:99] If the co-ordination of social activity requires the sharing of conceptions, it would appear that commensurability is an important subordinate criterion. This would seem to indicate a *transdisciplinarity* that is further supported by Laszlo's suggestion that the universe is not divided into discrete domains of knowledge. To let this criterion become implicit is not to degrade its significance. Rather, the expectation is that transdisciplinarity will be taken, within most epistemologies, as intrinsic to any social scientific project.

Despite this dedication to commensurability, "my objective is not complete overlap, because I do not want to live their lives in the existential sense they do."

[Susman, 1983:99]; nor would this meet the adaptive criterion of Ashby's Law (that sociodiversity is as essential as biodiversity). We do not therefore require authoritative or exclusive descriptions. They should be open to integration, or rational contrast, with other descriptions, but collectively they should display *diversity*.

A further implication of this presumed creative stress between diversity and commensurability concerns the cultural grounds of social construction.

Transculturalism is to be welcomed if it permits the sharing of experience, but not if it threatens diversity; as Shaw wrote, "Do not do unto others as you would that they

should do to you. Their tastes may not be the same." [Shaw, 1948:251] Furthermore, the absence of diversity and sensitivity to the environment may well fail to promote utility, since diversity of thought will have constructed diverse socio-technological environments. [Rajagopalan and Santhakumar, 1994; Chambers, 1983]. As with transdisciplinarity, however, and on the same grounds, transculturalism will remain a mostly implicit criterion.

A final pair of criteria are derived from utility, without reference to the perceived benefits of participation. This is the iteration between *theory* and *experience*. Should an explanation be sought for the assumed utility of such a process, it may be found in the sceptic's reluctance to rely on either objective or rationalist knowledge alone.

A number of criteria have now been offered, and soon their relationships will be explored. Before that, a comment about the pairing of the subordinate criteria may need some explanation.

While dichotomies are recognised as a potential danger, they can also be extremely useful in the description of a conceptual space, and the dangers may indicate the direction of a constructive response. Firstly, as certainly as anything in our experience opposed pairs are not isolated from other pairs. Secondly, the pairs do not necessarily represent good and evil, though some may be seen to be opposed in this way. Both dynamic equilibrium and iteration are used as alternative to opposition. In summary, then, the criteria of participative modelling might therefore be summarised in a tabular form thus:

| Criterion | Status | Mode of employment |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Utility - disutility | principle | oppositional |
| Accessibility-obscurity | subordinate | oppositional |
| Accessibility - precision | subordinate | dynamic equilibrium |
| Diversity-commensurability | subordinate | dynamic equilibrium |
| Scope-specificity | subordinate | iterative |
| Experience - theory | subordinate | iterative |

Accessibility, obscurity, and precision

To illustrate accessibility is not difficult.

For example, the story of the good Samaritan is a conceptual intervention, as is also the Mahabatra, or the tales of Loki in Norse mythology or of the Coyote in Amerind folklore. Interestingly, these latter have been used by Taket and White [1995b] in the practice of intervention, as suggested roles for facilitators. Ackoff has written fables to communicate on management issues [Ackoff, 1992]. Gabriel [1991] has discussed how variations on stories are generated and how they are influential within organisations. In a similar sense, Vahl has looked at the use of stories, and noted how "stories constitute support systems that help ascribe actorship to individuals.." [Vahl, 1992:5] This might be interpreted as equivalent to the notion that ideologies may be expressed in many different forms, including normative narratives, which include role definitions of independence or passivity. Attention is thereby drawn to the importance of the development of the normative tradition through folklore, and in particular to the ascribed authority, or charismatic ability, to amend the tradition. An example of

ascribed authority might be found in the power structures which determine what will be seen on television, ranging from nationalised channels to those whose parameters are dictated by those who pay for the advertisements. An example of charismatic influence can be found in popular music; John Lennon's *Imagine* is clearly ideological, as is the more recent phenomenon of gangsta rap, which expresses anti-authoritarian and misogynist attitudes.

In considering accessibility, personal qualities of the interventionist may be as important as intellectual ones. Those who favour participation are likely to be attracted to Gregory and Romm's suggestion that "the normative value of "openness" underpins the process of appropriate intervention" [Gregory and Romm, 1994:6]. Yet although this might appear to be a pre-requisite of intervention, there are those who appear to find manipulative attitudes consistent with a facilitative approach. Taket and White, despite criticising Midgley for a lack of openness in communication, and adopting criteria such as co-responsibility, empowerment, and responsiveness, nevertheless encourage the use of guises, and even disguises, in intervention [Taket and White, 1995b]. Perhaps it is best to limit the present discussion to the assertion that personal qualities are an important aspect of the interventionist, even though there are presumably social scientific roles which would not incorporate immediate action research. The reasoning behind this assumption is that if the criterion of any intervention is utility, direct experience of life as it is led in a variety of circumstances is likely to play a part in being able to interpret others' experiences, objectives and perspectives; and even those who operate strictly within the academic realm are involved in social intervention.

Accessibility cannot be asserted as an absolute criterion, however. While nearly always to be preferred to obscurity, one might have thought, accessibility can be at

the cost of inappropriate ambiguity. Where it can be combined with precision an ideal has been reached; though at times precision may be preferred to accessibility. Gödel's theorem, for example, is significant to anyone with an interest in epistemology, yet few have the mathematical skills to deal with it in the original.

At other times the trade-off may suggest a different equilibrium. At the intersection of the natural and the social sciences, in socio-technological systems, the translation of specialist language may appear to be a major problem [Biot *et al*, 1993; Lightfoot *et al*, 1989]; but because precision of vocabulary and syntax seems to produce the most successful technologies, some degree of interdisciplinary obscurity may have to be tolerated.

This is not as evidently the case with social theory. Jargon may be used as a form of short-hand, but there are also instances in which it would appear that the obscurity is otiose. Opening a book at random one might come across the phrase: "a multiplicity of sovereign states coexist within a states-system that is coextensive with the single economic division of labour." [McGowan, 1981:54] Using the same number of words, one might write instead that "Goods and services tend to be produced where it is cheapest to do so, without regard for national boundaries." Has anything significant been lost in the translation? Curiously, a straw poll on the issue amongst six academics left the question unanswered, despite the unanimity of the view that the use of jargon is frequently misplaced.

In general, however, it may be supposed that the appropriate equilibrium between the needs of the audience and the demands of the subject matter will always remain contingent. Obscurity, however, can become a habit where it is not a necessity, and,

where participation is a crucial dynamic, as it is in social interventions, accessibility would seemingly need to be given a high priority.

Diversity and commensurability

The relationship between diversity and commensurability offers a second instance of a need to maintain a dynamic equilibrium in our descriptive systems.

Krippendorff's argument on metaphors of communication illustrates some of the benefits of diversity [Krippendorff, 1993]. In this he presents a number of options for the way in which communication can be seen, including the idea of communication as the transfer of a container, as a conduit, as a control mechanism, and as a dance or ritual. As has often been remarked, metaphors are partial, concealing some aspects of that to which they refer, and revealing other aspects [eg: Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:10].

The diversity of metaphors helps us to appreciate the complexity of an issue such as communication. Thus the anger a pedant might feel if someone were to thoroughly and carelessly split an infinitive would be inexplicable in the container metaphor, since the grammatical error has no significant effect on meaning; but in the metaphor of ritual it would be a formal offence with implications which would not be apparent in the former metaphor.

Under Confucianism, the use of precisely measured court music, prescribed steps, actions, and phrases all added up to an extremely complex system of rituals, each used for a particular purpose at a particular time. A saying was recorded about K'ung Fu-tse: 'If the mat was not straight, the Master would not sit.' [Hoff, 1984:3]

In a more obviously practical context, the benefits of diversity in the models used in social intervention are clearly advertised in the Open University course on Creative Management [B882,1992]. A wide range of possible techniques is offered, on the grounds that the aim is to increase managerial competence, the requirements of which are neither predictable nor stable.

Nevertheless, as has been suggested, diversity is not an unequivocal good.

In any co-operative venture, the selection of the tools is clearly dependent on the ability to agree on criteria. In this context, the counterweight to diversity may perhaps be described as commensurability; but commensurability is not to be confused with comprehensive agreement. Rather, the term may be taken to represent accommodation, an agreement to differ, which some have seen as an appropriate purpose of debate [Romm, 1994].

Rorty's usage, to which reference has already been made (page 54), may be a helpful starting point;

By "commensurable" I mean able to be brought under a set of rules which will tell us how rational agreement can be reached on what would settle the issue on every point where statements seem to conflict. [Rorty, 1980:285]

Well and good; yet if one adopts the hard reading of this interpretation, commensurability might be practically unattainable; or if attained, impractical, being hypothetical or counterfactual. We clearly do not, in practice, require determinants for every point at issue. Furthermore, such determinants would arguably be least

accessible where they were most needed, since the rationality and the terminology of diverse perspectives might have few points of cross-reference.

A much softer reading of Rorty's interpretation of commensurability might therefore appear to be appropriate. The purpose of referring diverse descriptions to common criteria, it may be recalled, is to allow appropriate tools to be selected from the options available. Where, therefore, there is apparent incommensurability, a helpful first step might be to identify the premises which lead to this dissonance. These premises may, of course, concern the nature of rationality.

At one level, a reference to an earlier argument may make the point. Poetry is not irrational for failing to conform to the canons of propositional logic. Even "my father moved through theys of we", which Hodge dismisses as probably hopelessly ungrammatical [Hodge, 1976:22], may be intuitively sensible to those who were nurtured on "I am he as you are we as we are he and we are all together." If no description is certain or complete, we have room for many rationalities.

A rather different case arises where rigour is implicitly claimed, but only questionably achieved. Again, Krippendorf may be used, or abused, as an example. He claims both that

- we have no direct access to each others' experience;
- and that "communication becomes a social phenomenon precisely when...the participating communicators are ...enabled to see themselves through the eyes of Others..."[Krippendorf, 1993:17]

At one level, this could be challenged as depending on a false premise.

Wittgenstein's private language argument is a contradiction of the idea that we can have a language the words of which 'refer to what can only be known to the person

speaking.' [Wittgenstein, 1953: 1.243] Communication is necessarily and always a social phenomenon. However, no feasible premise is irrational, even if discrepant premises may lead to incommensurability. The more significant discrepancy of rationality arises from the difficulty of allowing Krippendorff's two assumptions to co-exist; how is it intelligible to suggest that we can see through the eyes of others if we cannot experience each others' experience?

Would it be necessary to insist that Krippendorff accepted my rationality for us to collaborate? What degree of commensurability is precisely necessary? Perhaps all that is needed to balance the adaptive virtues of diversity is a soft commensurability: a requirement no greater than that opposed theorists can understand why they differ in their premises, discursive practises, or rationality.

In the context of this argument, however, simplicity may be favoured. Can we agree that if diversity of description is desirable, so too is common ground in communication, with the balance between the two varying according to circumstances? I find it hard to see why co-operative researchers would wish to adopt a vastly dissimilar position.

Scope and specificity

To some extent scope and specificity mirror the relationship between commensurability and diversity. If we are to have ideas dealing with local issues, we might expect benefit from taking local variations into account. Specificity demands diversity. If we are seeking agreement on a more extensive issue, a high degree of compatibility between underlying theories is probably desirable. Scope demands commensurability.

At the same time, the relationships within each pair are, I would suggest, distinct. A simple way of identifying the difference would be between the yin of non-critical regard, and the yang of critical challenge. Each is valuable, each is constructive, but the style is different. A dynamic equilibrium between commensurability and diversity may be seen as encouraging accommodation in the external relations between theories. Scope and specificity, on the other hand, are here seen as essentially concerned with a universalising tendency within a body of opinion which is continually revised by challenges between its components. Here iteration between local experience and general theory appears to be a more appropriate form of relationship.

To elaborate on this point: the sceptic will typically argue that there is no adequate reason to assume a universal rationality, or to insist on the compression of all knowledge into an integrated whole. Those who prefer to describe themselves as post-modernist agree that care must be taken to avoid a tendency towards a grand narrative which "anticipates all questions and provides pre-determined answers;" [Taket and White, *after* Lyotard, 1995a:1054]; that is, a form of thought which can only conceive of the universe from its own perspective and within its own terminology.

This is not, however, a denial of the usefulness of learning about how ideas relate. It is hard to better Dewey on this subject:

If thought or intelligence is the means of intentional reconstruction of experience, then logic, as an account of the procedure of thought, is not purely formal.....[It is not] concerned with the inherent thought structures of the universe, as Hegel's logic would have it; nor with the successive approaches of human thought to this objective thought structure as the logic of Lotze, Bosanquet, and other epistemological logicians would have it. If thinking is the way in which deliberate reorganisation of

experience is secured, then logic is such a clarified and systematised formulation of the procedures of thinking as will enable the desired reconstruction to go on more economically and efficiently. In language familiar to students, logic is both a science and an art; a science so far as it gives an organised and

tested descriptive account of the way in which thought actually goes on; an art, so far as on the basis of this description it projects methods by which future thinking shall take advantage of the operations that lead to success and avoid those which result in failure. [Dewey, 1950:115]

There is, then, an evident utility in using our intellectual experience to improve our cartographic abilities. In Polanyi's words the "richness of explicit knowledge is admittedly related to its distinctive logical characteristics." [Polanyi, 1958:14] Peirce reflects this idea in arguing for a "systematic study of the conceptions out of which philosophical theory may be built in order to ascertain what place each conception may fitly occupy in such a theory, and to what use it is adapted." [Peirce, 1958:145]

The pursuit of internal consistency can thus be seen as a creative moment; but from Nagel we may take the warning against too glib an explanation:

I believe one should trust to problems over solutions, intuition over arguments, and pluralistic discord over systematic harmony. Simplicity and elegance are never reasons to think that a philosophical theory is true; on the contrary, they are usually reasons for thinking it false. [Nagel, 1979:x]

Consistency is not intended here to signify the same notion as might be implied by its use in propositional logic. This is in part because the complex, rich structures of thought are not necessarily best accommodated by linear sequences of inference between axioms. If propositional logic is seen as a model of sequential inference, the conception favoured here is much closer to that of a network that constantly adapts in the hermeneutic cycle. Quine put forward this view in his thesis of the indeterminacy of radical translation [Quine, 1964], and in proposing that no change of use of any term could take place without changing the use of all other associated terms [Quine, 1969] since they are all interdependent. In this he was echoing the earlier work of Duhem [1969], who argued both that all theory is underdetermined by evidence, and that a challenge to one part of any theory is a challenge to the whole.

Underlying this is the simple ground that language is not seen as having the specificity that propositional logic requires. The argument offered earlier on this issue can be recapitulated simply by noting Wittgenstein's conversion. In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* he adopted the view that, all appearances to the contrary, language was reducible to atomistic pictures corresponding to reality. By the time he was preparing the posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations* his view had changed utterly, and the idea of a correspondent language had given way to a metaphor of overlapping language games that were rooted in, and continually undergoing change, due to their use. Language was not seen to refer directly to reality, but to be itself an act which can only be interpreted in terms of the wider behavioural context. It is this latter view that is used here, supported by T.S.Eliot's view that

Words strain,

Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,

Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,

Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,

Will not stay still.

Burnt Norton, V

Given this understanding of language, it is grammatical and semantic criteria rather than the dictates of propositional logic that are taken to be crucial to social scientific rationality.

Nevertheless, more formal logic may be useful in identifying problems of consistency or confusions of meaning. For example, circularity, in which it is asserted that a conclusion has been demonstrated when the conclusion was embedded in one of the assumptions, is distrusted; but this distrust is only appropriate within the hierarchical view of language. A network view has no pretensions to proof, so that while circularity may be evidence of analytic triviality; it may also be evidence of coherence. Making allowance for the sceptical view of truth, the criterion of coherence may be stated thus: "...a proposition may be accepted as true if it is coherent with other propositions which are known to be true; but it is not suggested that the truth of these propositions lies in their coherence." [Flew, 1979:66]

Formal logic may also contribute to an awareness of the consequences of ambiguity. Of course, from the network perspective all terms are ambiguous to some extent. However, there are pernicious uses of ambiguity, such as the sliding of meaning. To use an illustration selected by Hodges, Keynes' General Theory "was inconsistent because it maintained that the level of savings was always equal to the level of investment, although people admitted that if people saved all their money rather than spending it, there would be no investment. The ambiguity lies in the word save: in common parlance it means hoarding, but it has a quite different sense in Keynes' theory." [Hodges, 1976:25] The formal process of precise definition can also clear up

apparent inconsistencies. When critical systems writers refer to pragmatism, [Flood and Jackson, 1991a:322; Fuenmayor, 1991:239 *et seq*] their position is understandable if the demotic interpretation of pragmatism is used; but if the academic context is to be respected, their remarks become mystifying.

Self-evidently, within the network view of language, and more particularly in the overlapping language game formula, such conflicts are inescapable; and, since no particular form of rationality is taken to be an absolute standard, we cannot expect all debate to be readily resolved by appeals to reason [Romm, 1994]. However, although we may not seek consistency as an absolute good, we may wish to use the iteration between specificity and scope as a way of integrating our ideas under common codes.

To repeat the point made above: the yin approach to difference is one of tolerance, diversity sustained by the search for accommodation. The yang response to difference is one of critical challenge, directed towards unifying an ever-widening range of propositions within one rationality by using specifics to challenge the theories of greater scope: a search for commensurability.

Theory and experience

Another relationship that interacts with scope and specificity is that which may be conceived between theory and experience. During the process of integrating interpretations of experience, specific accounts give way to generalisations. This is again an iterative relationship, in which experience challenges theory, which is itself used to interpret the experience.

In particular, the specific provides opportunities for empirical testing which, owing to multivariate complexity and abstraction, may not be available to metatheory. It may, however, be difficult to discover quite what has been demonstrated by the refutation of an hypothesis. Lakatos [1974,1978] in particular noted the capacity of metatheory to abandon hypotheses of lesser scope in order to preserve the central hypothesis, while Duhem encouraged the view that we can only test a set of theories [1969]. Shifting into the epistemology of the social sciences, a metanarrative which had consistently failed to produce desirable outcomes might be thought a suitable case for subsumation, however persuasive the metanarrative itself. In terms of the natural sciences, 'desirable outcomes' might be taken to mean a failure to refute a subordinate hypothesis. In the social sciences a desirable outcome might be taken to refer to an intervention which is subsequently endorsed by the stakeholders. Retention of a metanarrative when it has failed to provide a guide to effective interventions may indicate the professional interests of a research group rather than the wider interests of the community.

In this sense, although the class analysis of Marx has produced an extraordinary quantity of subsidiary theories of lesser scope, experience has not tended to encourage the view that human behaviour is predominantly a function of the extent to which one owns the means of production. Should we therefore dispense with the Marxist metanarrative even though the metanarrative itself cannot be refuted? There certainly seems to be a case for doing so: yet care must be taken not to dispense with a useful paradigm because of trivial experimental failures. When, for example, Blau identifies four facets of social structure - integration, differentiation, organisation, and opposition [Blau, 1967:327] - he is working with a wide focus that can accommodate both Marxism and Islam.

| | integration | differentiation | organisation | opposition |
|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Marxism | working class solidarity | material circumstances | the role of leadership cadres in transition between capitalism and socialism | class conflict |
| Islam | mutual support of the faithful | enlightenment | the role of the mullah / alim / ayatollah | punishment of transgressors |

The core hypothesis is that an analysis based on these dynamics will provide explanations for social phenomena, while the application invented above suggests that it could lead to helpful transcultural accommodations.

However, Blau derives this assertion from his metanarrative

as long as the concern with the impression he makes *dominates* the individual's thinking, he cannot become completely involved in the social situation or fully enjoy it, and neither can he thoroughly concentrate on his tasks [*ibid*: 75].

This proposition would appear, however, to be contingent. A professional politician, for example, would seem to be an empirically grounded refutation of the idea. Should the metanarrative be rejected on these grounds?

Perhaps the answer lies in Lakatos' [1974,1978] notion of a progressive research programme. In this context, a metatheory is worthy of respect and investment if it demonstrates a capacity to generate fruitful experiments. In the social sciences this might suggest that it has contributed to the generation of fruitful interventions. Such a notion would, of course, be consistent with the idea of paradigms which has been invoked here; a model that cannot be tested empirically, but which can be used to

generate empirical propositions which may be adopted, adapted and locally owned and tested. If it fails to demonstrate its utility in such a role, it may be unceremoniously ditched.

The relations between theory and experience and scope and specificity are thus seen to construct an intricate conceptual space; and there is still one more aspect that needs to be considered. How do we respond to historical data?

As Santhakumar and Rajagopalan [1994] have emphasised, interventions necessarily take place in an historical context, and discontinuous change is rarely successful. Diachronous analysis has many potentials. The investigation of historical evidence may be an essential part of the process of testing theory, as with Foucault on madness [Foucault, 1991:124-167]; or, as in the case of Arighi's *The Geometry of Imperialism* [1978], a means towards the construction of a present instrument of analysis. A further critical function applies to both theory and the interpretation of experience: an aspect of Foucault's project may be described as freeing oneself from a theoretical straightjacket not through a Kantian deduction of the necessary elements of our conception, but through a deconstruction of our heritage (Dávila, 1993:403) :

While it is easy to be aware of the way in which experience interrogates theory, the recognition that the experience has been interpreted in the context of theory is equally important. Without such a recognition, and without attempts to reinterpret phenomena in radically diverse ways there is always a danger of simply confirming one's prejudices.

9. Validation/ legitimation / justification

At this point, a brief summary might be desirable.

The recent aim has been to discover a set of criteria intended to make intervention effective, in a manner consistent with the commitments. Earlier it has been asserted that

scepticism implies pragmatism; that is, that utility rather than truth is the primary criterion of rational belief;

if none of us has a privileged access to the truth, and each of us is morally relevant, equity in the construction of social institutions is a desirable objective;

for the idea of a social scientist to be intelligible it is necessary to suppose that they have some expertise;

that expertise may be experiential or theoretical: the reporting of what is considered to be best practice in similar circumstances elsewhere, or the offering of conceptual maps of immediate action or of social process;

this applies to process interventions; the facilitator is invited or accepted for reasons similar to those which apply to other forms of intervention;

to combine expertise with participation requires persuasiveness rather than authority;

persuasiveness without imposition is dependent in part on the qualities of the individual and in part on the perceived utility of the ideas they offer;

there is a set of criteria which may help us to identify ideas which offer a reasonable chance of effecting a successful intervention.

| Criterion | Status | Mode of employment |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Utility - disutility | Principle | oppositional |
| Accessibility-obscurity | Subordinate | oppositional |
| Accessibility - precision | Subordinate | dynamic equilibrium |
| Diversity-commensurability | Subordinate | dynamic equilibrium |
| Scope-specificity | Subordinate | iterative |
| Experience - theory | Subordinate | iterative |

Interpretation of the criteria

In constructing a method for this research, the next tasks would seem to be

- to check the criteria against some broader principle; a form of triangulation.
- to make the subordinate criteria less unwieldy.
- and to make the methodology more widely accessible

The first stage of the process of simplification and triangulation is to identify higher order sets, and this may be achieved by reference to the action research cycle of planning, acting, and reflecting. [Lewin, 1946] It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that in this context the elements of action research are less distinct, or more reflexive, than in some other instances. For example, the action under consideration is the intervention of the social scientist through the presentation of ideas, so that the act is itself a form of planning. Furthermore, a commitment to co-researching or co-generation [Levin, 1994] further compresses the stages and blurs the roles. Action in this instance is seen very much in the tradition of *praxis* [Joll (on Gramsci), 1977]; that is, action is not a distinct and separate element from thought, but an integration of act and understanding.

Nevertheless, the cycle is useful as a way of disaggregating the components of an intervention, and as a means of checking that the taxonomy of the criteria is reasonably comprehensive. Judgements of whether that is achieved are likely to vary, and are open to debate. Nevertheless, as the table below suggests, this approach provides a rationale for identifying a simplified set of the criteria. These may then be used as a guide to the assessment of a conceptual intervention.

| Action research cycle | Stages of paradigmatic intervention | Subordinate criteria | Simplified criteria for conceptual interventions |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Plan | Design | Scope - specificity Experience - theory Diversity - commensurability | Validation - critical challenge - theoretical consistency - empirical evidence |
| Act | Offer / amend | Accessibility - precision Accessibility - obscurity | Legitimation - open discussion / free choice - respect for experience |
| Reflect | Assess | Utility | Justification - subjective experience - intersubjective experience - critical evaluation |

Some clarification may be necessary, starting with the terminology.

Validation refers to the placing of a paradigm within a recognised discourse.

Validity is, of course, used in logic to indicate that an argument is consistent with a particular rationality, not that it is true. (The use of *to validate* as synonymous with *to value* is an etymological deviation that may, regrettably, lead to some confusion.)

Legitimation is taken to be an appropriate term for the offering and adoption of a paradigm, because both this process and democratic law are governed by normative considerations.

Justification is associated with utility because of the moral content of the term and of the context. In keeping with the moral commitments, justice is seen to be done when the outcome of an intervention is approved by the stakeholders.

A second area of clarification is the relationship between the subordinate criteria as they were originally expressed and as they have emerged in the more accessible set; that is, between columns three and four above.

Validation seems straightforward enough.

Scope and specificity were discussed in terms of iteration in search of internal consistency, which translates into critical challenges to demonstrate that qualities of rationality that are considered desirable in a theory should be met.

Theory and experience are also iterative, so that the theoretical validation needs to be related to empirical evidence.

Diversity and commensurability were seen as requiring a dynamic equilibrium, through mutual accommodation between theories.

Validation in the vernacular could be described as asking *"Does the idea make sense in itself? What's happened when people have tried it? What other ways of looking at the issue are there?"*

Legitimation is in many ways a more complex criterion.

Accessibility and obscurity are in opposition to each other, with accessibility always favoured. Obscurity is perceived as a regrettable side effect of detailed analysis. Accessibility is not, however, merely access to meaning. It is perceived here as access to ownership of an adopted paradigm - the reconstruction of meaning; hence the importance of open discussion and free choice.

Accessibility and precision are seen in dynamic equilibrium with each other, the moment at which precision becomes unnecessarily obscure helps in the identification of the balance point.

Because legitimation relies, in theory, on ideal speech, which has earlier been declared unattainable and unidentifiable, there are practical difficulties to overcome. These will be explored in the next section, but another important point is probably best

made here. Legitimation is iterative. For simplicity's sake, I would suggest three stages.

The first of these is to use the experience of stakeholders and experts to formulate problems. This principle is related to, but not identical with, grounded theory [Glaser and Strauss, 1968], which seems to make unwarrantable claims about the neutrality of abstraction of categories, and to leave too much to a methodology controlled by an elite. Long and Long may come closer, with their description of actor-centred enquiry as

attempts to unravel the complexities of meaning and social action through the development of a conceptual framework which accords priority to the understanding of everyday life situations. [Long and Long, 1992:6]

Legitimation also requires that stakeholders should assess any conceptual framework after the academics have translated it into and tested it within their own discourse; that is, after the validation process. Thirdly, legitimation requires the voluntary adoption of a paradigm by stakeholders before it is implemented as the ground of any policy.

Each of the three stages of legitimation is subject to the simplified criteria of open discussion/free choice, and respect for experience, which, it is hoped, represent reasonably the earlier subordinate criteria of accessibility and precision. In turn, the demotic form is an attempt to translate the substance of the criteria: *"Listen to others, but think for yourself."*

The third criterion is *justification*; the evaluation of an intervention in terms of its outcomes.

Utility has been defined as the primary criterion, but clearly there are problems in assessment. For this reason attention has been drawn to the importance of subjective reports, as well as to intersubjective assessments. Harder data are not excluded, but are seen as a contribution to critical evaluation, which should not disregard less tangible influences on people's conceptions of their welfare.

Several other points may be made in this context.

For example, a distinction between desirability and predictability is important, since it is quite feasible that consistently acceptable outcomes will arise without having been selected in advance. This is not merely an acceptance that responsive and flexible processes can be at least as important as clearly defined goals, but also a recognition that we do not always know how we achieve good results. If someone's intuition is reliable in the production of desirable outcomes, we should not let the binary opposition between masculine science [good] and feminine feeling, connection and relatedness [bad] obstruct our progress and processes [Keller, 1992:47]. Utility as a criterion must take precedence; other criteria are measures of the means which are likely to produce utility.

A second issue concerns subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and objectivity in relation to evaluative processes.

As has been argued already, the idea of utility as a straightforward computation is a very mechanistic conception of an intuitive process. [Keller's comments on the gendering of knowledge also cast an interesting light on Sedgewick, Bentham, and to some extent Mill's formulation of an old idea.] The data on which outcomes are to be

assessed are not, at least in the view of the sceptic, objective. Personal reports are essential.

....when I say I have a toothache..(to) ask "are you sure that it's you who have the pains?" would be nonsensical..... [Wittgenstein, 1975:67];

and the same might be said of emotions. However, emotions would appear to be to some extent public in their construction, if not in their sensation, and the normative, evaluative context is crucial to an understanding of the personal reports. In addition, our welfare does not depend solely on our individual circumstances. Without necessarily accepting all that he says, it is possible broadly to share Blau's view that

People's associations proliferate through social space and time. Social relations unite not only individuals in groups but also groups in communities and societies. The associations between individuals often become institutionalised to perpetuate the form of organisation far beyond the life span of human beings. The main sociological purpose of studying processes of face-to-face interaction is to lay the foundation for an understanding of the social structures that evolve and the emergent social forces that characterise their development. [Blau,1967:13]

Unless we seek to understand social phenomena, we ignore the context which helps to shape us. However, if we too readily accept that they have been reified, we may tend to forget that their existence and perpetuation is dependent on intersubjective construction, and individual interpretation and responses. The interaction between the subjective experience and the normative influence is crucial; but the analysis of the normative influence should not persuade us that we have an absolute insight into the distortions affecting others' preferences. There is no view from nowhere. One may sympathise with Einhorn's view of trends in the former GDR, which follows; but by

what standard could we claim that the women in question must be made to conceive of their circumstances differently? [Richards, 1980:27]

The image of the female tractor driver is out, as is Superwoman wearing a hard-hat on a building site. Cinderella of fairy-tale fantasy ad dreams is back....She works, yes, but only in the household, so that her feminine qualities are not marred by the fatigue and premature aging incurred by the hardships of the double burden. [Einhorn,1993:216]

To summarise: justification of an intervention is dependent on its intended or achieved utility. That utility is understood in terms of the personal reports of those who are affected. The benefits to or detracting from the social environment forms part of that report, but the awareness of normative social phenomena also offers us insights into the influences on our personal experiences, in the form of critical awareness. Hard data may also contribute to that awareness.

In the vernacular form, the criterion of justification might be expressed thus: *"Is it good for us together? Good for you alone? and is it good for what you think we could become?"*

| Simplified criteria for conceptual interventions | Vernacular |
|--|---|
| Validation - critical challenge - theoretical consistency - empirical evidence | "Does the idea make sense in itself? What's happened when people have tried it? What other ways of looking at the issue are there?" |
| Legitimation - open discussion / free choice - respect for experience | "Listen to others, but think for yourself." |
| Justification - subjective experience - intersubjective experience - critical evaluation | "Is it good for us together? Good for you alone? and is it good for what you think we could become?" |

A brief validation of the criteria

In order to assess this set of criteria, one could argue that it would have to be applied to itself; but that is not immediately feasible. Justification would require more extensive research than is possible in the immediate circumstances. Nor has legitimation of the method been achieved in any detail, although those who participated in the field work were made aware of the methodological philosophy behind the research. Validation has also only been partly achieved. The discussions of positivist methodologies and of systemic and action research alternatives have provided a broad context into which a paradigmatic research programme fits quite comfortably. In terms of a critical challenge from a concise set of criteria, those offered by Midgley seem to offer the most effective counterpoint – or harmony? - to the ideas expressed here.

The criteria he selects for acts of intervention are improvement, critical awareness, and methodological pluralism [Midgley, 1995]. In so far, as that simple enumeration goes, there appears to be little conflict. Indeed, it might be possible to argue that improvement runs parallel to justification, critical awareness to validation, and methodological pluralism to legitimation. Could this be a dangerous oversimplification?

The first of these equations - justification and improvement - may be allowed to stand, in all probability.

The second equation - validation and critical awareness – would be impossible, if the critical awareness in Midgley's *oeuvre* were taken to refer to the transcendence of any particular form of reason. Such a view would make the deconstruction of language potentially a positivist task, while the sceptic leaves the ultimate choice of beliefs in the mind of the individual. As has already been mentioned, a sceptic is always asking "How do you know that this, rather than that is the better hypothesis?"

[Harman, 1990:150], which implicitly echoes the Rice-Davies codicil; "Well they would say that, wouldn't they?" ¹ Critical awareness is essentially the epistemological perspective of the sceptic to each and every assertion of knowledge, without any assumption that critical analysis allows one to subtract distortions. Happily, Midgley's critical awareness "simply concerns making boundary judgements" [Personal communication, Summer, 1997], so that potential dissonance is resolved.

In the third possible equation, methodological pluralism is related to legitimization: "there is also a need for methods that explore and develop the unique perspectives of individual actors, or which seek out new perspectives." [Midgley, 1995:946]. So far, so good, but again the compatibility of the views is dependent on correctly placing Midgley's use of the term *critical*.

Midgley has written elsewhere that "...the legitimacy of using a particular method arises out of our critical understanding of the context of application and the questions being asked..." [Midgley, 1992b:148] This could be taken to mark him as sympathetic to the Habermasian derivative which appears to be the view expressed in Total Systems Intervention [Flood and Jackson, 1991a]: that particular methodologies can be determinately assigned to particular domains of knowledge.

¹ Mandy Rice-Davies' response to various denials of her clients among the Tory cabinet, and as fine a summary of the critical perspective as I can imagine being offered.

The question is, then, whether or not there is the possibility of a metatheoretical dispensation of appropriate methodologies, or whether the selection of appropriate tools is the province of the participants. While some others in the critical systems field seem to have been unequivocally committed to the TSI view, Midgley appears to have steered a more cautious course. He has written that

....pluralists, as I see it, must give explicit recognition to a meta-theory. If they fail to do this, then they are engaging not in pluralism, but in a form of atheoretical pragmatism. [Midgley, 1992b:168]

Is there a point of difference? The notion that all pragmatists simply select tools at random would be self-evident nonsense. What is crucial is that to the sceptical pragmatist, and, to Midgley, a meta-theory may define a boundary and what it contains, but cannot define its own context.

One point of discrepancy is quite clear, however. From the point of view of the sceptical pragmatist consequentialist, amongst whom I number myself, there can be little doubt that justification is the over-riding evaluative criterion for any intervention. This does not contradict Midgley's assertion that "...the three concepts are truly interdependent: none of them could be understood adequately without the other two." [Midgley, 1995:947] Evaluation of outcomes is clearly dependent on validation of the assessment, and its legitimation.

However, when he goes on to say that "It is the three together that provide the necessary criteria for acts of judgement on the criticality and systemicity of interventions" [*ibid*] the possibility of some clarifications becomes attractive.

For example, to a sceptic criticality and systemicity are not necessary, but contingent in relation to a set of commitments; though it is quite possible that Midgley's phrase should be interpreted as 'necessary within this discourse'. Nevertheless, systemicity and criticality express a particular, unsanctified response to epistemological problems.

Secondly, there appears to be a displacement of the end by the means. Holism and critical awareness may be, in our conception, essential to any understanding but they are not ends in themselves. They are tools in the absence of which we would feel we have reason to doubt any assessment of intervention; but only in a positivist context does theorised method become sacrosanct.

Once again, it is the fear of positivism that is the potential source of discomfort; in particular, the manner in which a positivist epistemology allocates authority. By using the criteria of legitimation, validation and justification, and by assigning priority to justification, the approach favoured here devolves the assessment of an intervention to those who are affected by it. The set of criteria asserted by Midgley, interpreted positivistically, could leave the assessment of an intervention at the mercy of those who control these discourses.

Welcome as Midgley's attempt to identify a set of criteria as an alternative to the monolithic criterion of truth, I have at times feared that he would find himself reverting to it by a circuitous route. His most recent communications have assured me that this is an illusion. One should not judge someone's meaning by the company they keep; and it would therefore seem that we are close to an identity of understanding.

The argument with which the criteria of legitimation, validation, and justification are supported seems to be defensible in terms of others' conceptions, and with a sound base in moral, epistemological and ontological commitments. Nevertheless, such is the complexity of intervention in the construction of social institutions that the criteria can only plausibly be indicative. A more practical understanding of what each term encompasses would seem to be required.

Validation in academic terms, however, is a fairly well identified process, and justification is not within the scope of the research undertaken for this thesis. Through the field work, however, I sought some form of legitimation of my understanding of co-operation, a necessary prelude to which was an exploration of the problems which might arise.

10. Methodological problems of legitimation

As the end of the methodological discussion is approached, it may be worthwhile to recall the end to which it has been directed (*cf.* Introduction, §4).

My concern has been with the construction of a rationale for co-operative behaviour. Implicit to this has been the idea that the process of construction should itself reflect co-operative principles; hence the emphasis on consultation and participation. The instantaneous *ex nihilo* materialisation of a rationale simultaneously in many minds would not appear to be a reasonable expectation; yet any more laborious and extensive process seems likely to deviate from the ideal of perfectly shared belief. In this section some of these problems, and possible responses, are explored.

Forcing people to be free

Open discussion may in some ways be seen as reflecting Habermas' ideal speech, with a painstaking effort to avoid any positivist overtones. How could we ever attain the neutrality necessary to identify a certain truth even if we coincided with it? The implications of this qualification do not, fortunately, necessarily lead to incompatible research practices. Openness is constructed here as not merely a question of being allowed to speak, or sharing some of the language. It also involves critical challenges to the assumptions of others and of oneself, choice between discourses, and the control of the conditions of the discourse itself [Brauer, 1996].

For an intervention to be legitimated from a participative viewpoint, both procedure and content need to be transparent. This is not to say that in every case a detailed examination of the epistemology is required - a complete journey from the meta-theoretical premises and commitments to the detailed practical implications is likely to be impractical in many circumstances.

Monday, November 20th Took *Das Kapital* back to library on way in to work. With the best will in the world I am quite unable to get beyond page two. Goodness knows how Marx thought the uneducated masses were going to lap it up. [Matthew, 1980:133]

Let us suppose, however, that we all support the creativity and autonomy of learners and awareness of the control and ownership of research [Ison, 1990]; and that we broadly accept that "knowledge is socially constructed and is thus only applicable in its place of origin" [Russell and Ison, 1991:1048]. How do we then supply a logic for our roles as professional interventionists?

Surely it would be a direct formal contradiction to base this methodology on a universalist assertion, even if that assertion were not self-contradictory in positing interactions for a closed system.

It is one's history of interactions and the closed self-generating structure of the human (autopoiesis) that determines what will happen and the nature of the information. Often the observer acts as if there was a case of instruction by knowledge but this cannot be the case biologically. [*ibid*: 1050]

Merely because the focus of research has shifted from the proclaimed objectives of group activity to the group processes does not make it any the less an intervention; and in this case it seems clear that the intervention is based on scientific positivism.

Gregory and Romm have also drawn attention to the dangers of "...non-reflexive, purportedly (value-) neutral interventions.." [Gregory and Romm, 1994:5], and offered a persuasive response to the problem.

The tempering of partiality does not lie in pretended non-involvement, but rather in a continued self-reflection to ensure, (as far as possible) that the researcher's inputs do not spring from his or her wish to cling to his or her own perspective. [Gregory and Romm, 1994:14]

Although this seems an appropriate restraint, to achieve it may be extremely difficult. Indeed, according to Taket and White, critical systems thinking, within which framework Gregory and Romm appear to be working, is as unself-critical as any other totalising epistemology and

can be charged with the same offences i.e. fabricating modern understanding of organisations and interventions and re-enforcing the

myopic objectives of the modernist project. [Taket and White,
1995a:1054]

This may not, of course, be the case. Although the derivation of critical systems processes may be modernist, the practice need not be authoritarian in the covert imposition of processes that are consistent with a positivist epistemology. Vahl, for example, would appear to be conscious of this difficulty, distinguishing between politics as value-based intervention and research, the trademark of which "precisely is to reduce the biases that values introduce." [Vahl,1995:1] One of the ways in which this latter may be achieved is, according to Vahl, by the distribution of problems, but she recognises that even in these circumstances the role of the facilitator is often defined by local political agreements which derive from the wider hierarchy. In looking for models for change, rather than "models of..." which are essentially conservative, there is evidence of the critical perspective. In addition, the simplicity of reflecting individual concerns by using the formula "If this is where you are headed, what do you need to do?", may very well bring to the surface ideological conflicts. The reserved position of the facilitator is a practical and accessible expression of non-directive intervention.

in that sense, practise may expose the ideology through example. It may be felt, however, that a more active opposition to positivism is required. This would appear to be the attitude of Taket and White, and their postmodern critique is remarkably similar to the premodernist sceptical position. Neither intuition nor reason are seen as routes to the truth, and language is not a transparent medium through which the real can be represented. Empiricism is not dealt with directly, but science is not privileged as the *weltanschauung* which acts as gatekeeper for all true knowledge. [Taket and White, 1995a:1057]

They go on to say that

The implication of this postmodern critique is the view that it is dangerous to see any form of methodology as inherently liberatory or emancipatory. Whether it succeeds in achieving some outcomes that can be seen as liberatory or emancipatory is only ever locally decidable. [*ibid*]

So far there is a high degree of consistency between their project and that which is implied by sceptical pragmatic consequentialism. Whether the guide to critical action which they derive from Deleuze, Guattari and Foucault remains as consistent is less clear, but whether commensurable or consistent, it is worth relating:

1. free political action from all unitary and totalising paranoia;
2. develop action, thought, and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction, and not by subdivision and pyramidal hierarchisation;
3. withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law, limit, castration, lack, lacuna) which Western thought has so long held sacred as a form of power and an access to reality. Prefer what is positive and multiple: difference over uniformity; flows over unities; mobile arrangements over static systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic;
4. do not think that one has to be sad in order to be militant, even though the thing one is fighting is abominable. It is the connection of desire to reality (and not its retreat into forms of representation) that possesses revolutionary force;
5. the group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchised individuals, but a dynamic collection of multiplication, displacement and diverse combinations. [*ibid*;1057-8]

Can this manifesto be accommodated with the more reserved expressions of revolutionary sentiment that form the basis of this discussion? If the theme is correctly understood to be the constructive interaction of diverse motives and perspectives, then there only remains one significant point of contention. The call to the barricades - "It is the connection of desire to reality (and not its retreat into forms of representation) that possesses revolutionary force" - is incommensurable with the paradigmatic approach.

However, the construction of a dichotomy between hot blooded action and an interest in the forms of representation seems unnecessary. Whether one calls it diversity or proliferation, both passionate action and the development of alternative forms of representation of the world appear to be reasonable ways of opposing the abominable.

Whether those who favour passionate action preface it with passionate consultation or not is open to question. In some respects, the activist is no more concerned with the opinions of those whose lives they seek to change than is the mad scientist. Nevertheless, at an aesthetic level, passion may seem far more attractive than the mechanistic approach of Ajzen and Fishbein.

According to the theory of reasoned action, a person's intention is a function of two basic determinants, one personal in nature and the other reflecting social influence. [Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980:6]

Furthermore, their concern to reduce diversity of understanding and conception to a totalitarian unity makes all the limitations of the participative approaches seem positively benign;

This state of affairs has resulted in a proliferation of theories linking external variables to behavioural phenomena. From our point of view,

such a multitude of theories is not only unnecessary, but it actually impedes scientific progress. [*ibid*:9]

The preference here is to welcome the heterodoxy, and to welcome the insights offered by

- Checkland's soft system methodology and its subsequent elaborations [Checkland, 1981: Checkland and Scholes, 1991]
- by Argyris and Schön's insights into discursive construction, with their descriptions of cultures which do or do not encourage the critical attitudes that precede learning [Argyris, 1992];
- by Ison's design principles for participative research:
 - mutual satisfaction from participation;
 - the recognition that each person's experience is unique and valid;
 - the awareness of context;
 - enthusiasm is triggered by personal meaning;
 - individuals may not share institutional priorities;
 - open, collaborative and critically informed discourse;
 - social and individual construction of knowledge;
 - and the importance of diversity of experience. [Ison, 1993]

and understandings offered by others.

The essential point remains. Those of us who believe in the participative construction of social institutions have a reflexive responsibility to make our rationale accessible. My preference is for the criteria or design principles that have been distilled here. They appear to be accessible, validated, and flexible; but the richness of their meaning is obviously dependent on explorations such as in which I have just indulged.

Circularity

A second problem of legitimation lies in identifying and involving stakeholders. The issue, in this context, may be stated thus: how are those who are not necessarily politically or academically inclined to be given a significant and independent role in the process of ideological formation?

Bypassing the formal political machinery that dominates ideological construction is possible; cultural activities have already been suggested in such a role. Structuring an adequately sophisticated and explicit ideology, however, may not be within the scope of such informal processes. Academics may therefore have a useful role in seeking to integrate diverse streams of ideas and ideals.

Once this function has been fulfilled, however, it would seem appropriate to check that the idea has not been suborned, assimilated, or perverted; stage two of legitimation. Those who contributed to its formation should be given the opportunity to comment on its formalisation; but attempts to identify those who are qualified to make such comments can give rise to the problem of circularity. Does one choose those who agree with the proposition, on the grounds that they are *prima facie* those who must have given rise to it? If so, the proposition will necessarily be validated. Does one alternatively look for an organisationally definitive group, so that membership of Friends of the Earth would make one an appropriate judge of an environmentalist ideology? To do so would simply ensure the orthodoxy of any ideology, and counteract the aim of regeneration.

The alternative that has been preferred here is to try to identify people whose behaviour is consistent with that which is implied by the ideology. Critical attitudes will

be found amongst such people, since similarity of behaviour does not, *pace* Azjen and Fishbein, necessarily indicate that they share the same belief system.

This phase of legitimation is not rationally perfect, and is probably unappealing to those who dislike messiness; but is there a better? If participation in ideological formation is to be attempted, either a universal consensus must be sought, or some form of selective consultation must take place. Since universal consensus does not appear to be immediately feasible, the approach selected here may be the next best option.

Resource constraints

A third difficulty of legitimation relates to the previous one. Even having chosen behaviour as the criterion of selection, there are still difficulties in defining the population and the sample, especially in view of resource constraints.

Theoretically, at least, it would be possible to define certain indicators of behaviour that were consistent with the argument, to undertake research to identify the distribution of such indicators in the global population, to identify a representative sample, and to interview them with a view to discovering if they could share the rationalisation of their behaviour that was being put forward. The cost of such a course of action would be prohibitive even within a fairly curtailed cultural boundary. When the argument is offered as having a much wider relevance, it is difficult to conceive of such a task receiving serious consideration from any funding organisation capable of supporting it. The additional degree of confirmation attained would hardly be worth the effort, since imponderables are inherent to any process of ideological negotiation; and

the scale of the operation would require either so much time or so many interviewers, or both, that additional reasons for doubt would be introduced.

Legitimation in these circumstances can only ever be partial; but by seeking a range of interviews it is possible to support the idea that the argument did not only represent a deductive theoretical thesis, but a recognisable representation of the conceptual maps of a diverse group of people. To achieve more than this would not be a realistic target.

Imposed discourse

One additional element in the research was the testing of a belief that co-operation is a transcultural (which is not to say universal) phenomenon; that the argument could describe a rationale which would be equally applicable in communities with many distinctions in the overt patterns of behaviour. To some extent this is impossible to test, since those who are most disposed to agreement with an argument expressed in the discourse of one culture are presumably already embedded in that culture; while others might agree that in its own terms it makes sense, but would deny that it could be translated into the discourses of their own culture.

Clearly, given the rejection of the idea of a universal grammar, there is no possible means of certain translation. Thus the research may be thought of in an anthropological context:

There has been much recent discussion in linguistics of 'context'..., often thought of as a backdrop or framework to which language might be attached. It is important rather to see it as a process of contextualisation which occurs both in linguistic (or discursive) practice and in our analyses

of it. This is relatable to Ardener's insistence, throughout his work, on anthropology as an 'act of translation' .[Grillo, 1989:19]

Where possible, the interviews took place in the home or working environment of the interviewee, after the interviewer had had an opportunity to become to some extent familiar with it. This is very clearly a relative matter. The extent of the openness and understanding in a series of such transitory relationships must be questionable. In addition, it must be recognised that their motives even for this degree of agreement are open to question. They could be agreeing out of politeness, or even from a wish to escape the attentions of an apparent madman. Some degree of checking was possible, in that volunteered comments, examples, or criticisms illuminated the respondents' own opinions, and clarified their position *vis-à-vis* the argument that had been offered. Behaviour, of course, gave an even clearer indication of underlying commitments, supporting or undermining individual's verbal claims, as well as the appropriateness of my invitation to them to participate.

A metaphor that proved popular with many respondents, which emerged quite early in the research, was to suggest that the argument offered was a framework around which different individuals could weave their own decorations. This also allowed the expression of the idea that, while co-operators could express their convictions to each other in all sorts of languages, there is a need for it also to be expressed in the formal language of political economy, which equates to some extent with the framework; a reductive structure in many respects, but one which can withstand a variety of shocks and assaults.

How might a more authoritative confirmation of the legitimacy of the argument be pursued? Presumably, if people were asked to vote for a party using the argument as

the ground of its manifesto, a positive response would be an affirmation; but there would still be questions about the degree to which the voters had understood it, or about the variety of extraneous motives that could lead to an apparent democratic success. Perhaps there is no way that an ideology can be wholly legitimated, other than through its voluntary internalisation expressed as observable behaviour consistent with the ideology. Even then, volition is never completely demonstrable.

However, the difficulties of legitimating an ideology through consultation should not be taken to indicate that an ideology can be legitimated by reference to rationalistic first principles. One may feel sympathy for Rawls' humanist conclusions, but the idea that one can posit what would occur behind a veil of ignorance without incurring a cultural bias is simply another example of the transcendentalist fallacy [Rawls, 1972; Hare, 1989; Corrado, 1980]. Consultation through the hermeneutic cycle appears to be the only form of legitimation that is consistent with sceptical pragmatic beliefs, in the stage of legitimation that lies between the abstraction from practice and the acceptance of an ideology as a heuristic ground for action.

If all that may be claimed is that a variety of people were prepared to recognise the paradigm as reasonably consistent with their point of view, what process of ideological legitimation could claim more?

Consistency and change

Another inherent problem with this methodology is that if the comments of early participants are allowed to affect the argument, the later respondents will be faced with a different presentation, and legitimation will be further eroded as a demonstrable phenomenon. However, some kind of balance seems to be implied, because if one

ignores contributions and refinements, the argument is less representative than it might be.

This problem cannot be ignored, but if an ideology is recognised as an evolving discourse, the legitimisation process is never absolute or complete. This view of ideology is clearly not a universal one; to a Muslim, the Koran is seen as the literal word of God, and no word of it may be changed or challenged [Dawood, 1956:10]. Nevertheless, during the interviews, several Muslims expressed the belief that the Koran is open to interpretation, for how else is it to relate contemporary phenomena such as international movements of capital with seventh century laws such as that concerning usury? Despite this, it seems evident that a distinction must be drawn between those ideologies which construct themselves as living traditions, and those which represent themselves as universal truths.

Co-operation in this context might be seen as a living tradition; and while it may be preferable, from the point of view of the second stage of legitimisation, to hold firmly to one viewpoint, if legitimisation is taken as an iterative whole, the processes of abstraction, consultation, and voluntary implementation are liable to overlap. In this instance it will be suggested that the argument remained sufficiently stable to claim that all participants were responding to the same core thesis; but undoubtedly there were significant developments, as will be seen.

Inappropriate constraints on progressive research

If legitimisation cannot be absolutely achieved in these circumstances, should it be done at all? The answer in political and epistemological terms must be 'yes'. Perfect representation of diverse views is not possible; but clearly, in terms of political legitimisation, some process of negotiation is necessary if the range of political choices

in a mass society is to be neither impractically huge, nor reduced to the ideas of the most assertive members. If this process is not within the scope of a quantitative or purportedly objective social science, then there is a certain compulsion to ask whether that form of the social sciences is adequate.

There can be few doubts about the position adopted here. While this research undertaken has its limitations, a science which ignores relevant data because they are messy and transitory is selecting its subject matter to fit its method, rather than seeking the most appropriate method to construct potentially useful knowledge of all that its subject encompasses.

Therefore, despite the limitations of this research, it seems appropriate that it should be carried out. Legitimation of an ideology would seem to require a grounding in human beliefs and behaviour to prevent stultification and dogmatism. The first stage is to find the components of the ideology by listening. The second stage is to ask those who might be able to support the ideology what they think of the assembly of the components. The third stage is to ask who is willing to give it a go.

This third stage has been beyond the scope of this research programme, but it is hoped that the second stage will prove of interest, even if only in that curious category of case study proposed by Langrish [1993]: "Cor, look at that."

Part 2

In which the argument for co-operation is presented, and the assertions contained within it tested in relation to a selection of contrasting or supportive academic points of view; and in which the people with whom I discussed it are introduced, together with some of the ideas that they expressed.

11. The argument for co-operation

Origins in previous non-academic research

This argument did not emerge purely from theory, which is fortunate, considering the argument for the first stage of legitimation. The ideas expressed here may be thought of partly as the result of some twenty years non-academic action research into grass-roots co-operative behaviour.

A comprehensive analysis of these experiences would be difficult, since they were not formally recorded. To some this might discredit them as a research programme, even though writers such as Chambers [1983, 1989], Biot, Blaikie, Jackson and Palmer-Jones [1993] and Ison [1993] represent the considerable school of thought which emphasises the importance of non-academic research. The importance of the groundedness of theory is reflected in the assertion made by Sithembiso Nyoni that

no country in the world has ever developed itself through projects;
development results from a long process of experiment and innovation
through which people build up the skills, knowledge and self-confidence
necessary to shape their environment... [*quoted in Edwards, 1989:120*]

The environment with which we are concerned here is essentially the political environment. This should not be conflated with the government of the state, though clearly that is one aspect of politics. Politics is seen here as the arrangements we make to maintain coherence, given different ends [Potter, 1981:157].

My experiences of this phenomenon during twenty years of peripatetic community development and travel included participation in a wide variety of projects; setting up three arts centres; the development of a charity for the homeless; small co-operative businesses in the building trade, fruit and vegetable marketing, tree-felling, and music; restructuring a national cycle path design/build company; and the establishment of Friends of the Earth in the west country as a recycling business. As well as working, there has been rough travel throughout western Europe, and in north Africa, north and central America, and the Indian sub-continent. During this time, the living was often communal, and, in most of the instances named, the enterprises were tilted towards a non-coercive philosophy. This is not to say that coercion wasn't a factor in most of the enterprises; just that it was usually contrary to the espoused values.

These, then, are the roots of the argument. As Nyoni said, there is a long process of experiment and innovation through which people build up the skills, knowledge and self-confidence necessary to shape their environment. At some point, however, if they are to shape their political environment it is not enough for the people simply to build up those skills locally. They need to find expression in the dominant discourse of political economy, or remain subordinate to the conventional positions adopted within it. The conceptual space that is reified as our political institutions will not become a vacuum just because we choose not to occupy it.

Below can be found an argument that has its origins in the experiences of many extraordinary ordinary people; when compressed, abstracted and formalised this is one possible expression of a view of the world. However it seems to be quite widely shared by a variety of people of different genders, races, religions, nations, cultures, histories, situations and abilities - to take just a few of the ways of distinguishing between them. Why this ideology remains largely subordinate to the ethics of coercion

and market exchange is not necessarily explicable within the rationality of political economic discourse itself, except in so far as that discourse reflexively notes how it is itself distorted by the interests of the powerful [Hall, 1981].

The refined argument - after the interviews

Needs

We have needs.

Those needs may be described as social, psychological, and, some would say, spiritual, as well as material.

To meet those needs, we require resources. These, too, are of various kinds.

Some, certainly, are scarce: land and water, for example, are clearly finite in our present circumstances. Other resources would be adequate if distributional problems could be resolved. Food leaps to mind in this category.

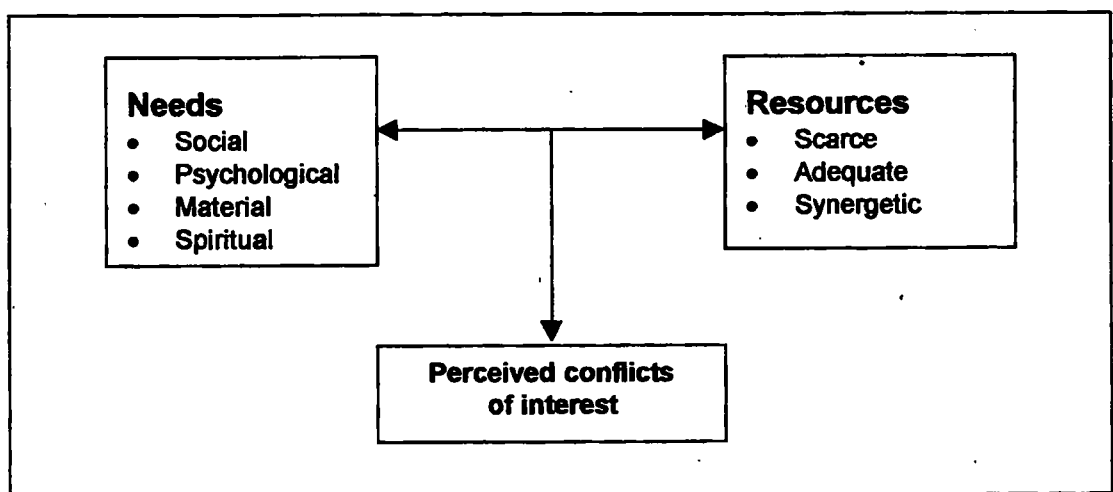
There is, however, a third category which is not always recognised. For example, if you are creative, you do not use up some finite resource of creativity; indeed, if you are creative, you are more likely to stimulate my own creativity than to inhibit it.

Resources in such a category may be described as *synergetic*.

These distinctions between types of resources have important implications for the way we might seek our satisfactions. We might, for example, try to reduce the impacts of scarcity by re-orientating ourselves towards the satisfactions to be gained from synergetic resources. Nevertheless, it seems unavoidable, in the foreseeable future, for us to find ourselves in competition for certain resources.

Thus (unless we believe that a self-directed, universal, and radical transformation of human nature is feasible), it may be asserted that we find ourselves facing conflicts of interest that are mostly dictated by circumstances, rather than being of our own choosing. There is no necessary coincidence between what each of us conceives to be in our personal interest. We can, nevertheless, make choices about how we are to respond to these circumstantial conflicts of interest.

Before looking at some of those choices, it may be helpful to decide how our responses could be assessed.



The criteria

The criteria may be derived in the following manner.

In the first place, an assumption is made that, although we may share certain needs, the ways in which we seek to satisfy them are diverse, both between individuals and over time. Secondly, it is assumed that this diversity must be respected, if we are to

approach fulfilment. The third assumption is that the quality of your experience is to be as well respected as is the quality of mine.

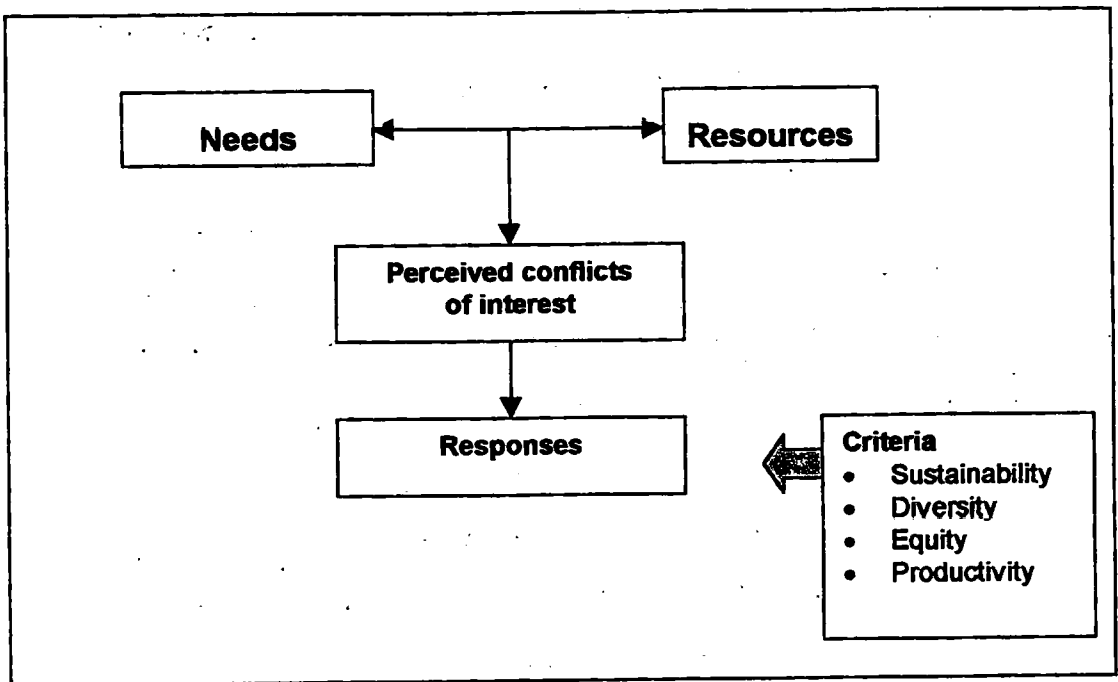
This set of assumptions may be summarised thus: if we are to have a collective aim, it will be *to offer to each individual a fair chance to satisfy their needs, across the whole range from spiritual to material, to whatever extent is possible without preventing others from doing the same.*

Two criteria - diversity and equity - have been openly built into this statement. Two other criteria are implicit: productivity, because the more resources we have, the more opportunities there are; and sustainability, because the phrase "each individual" is taken to include those who have not yet been born.

It is important to emphasise two further points.

Firstly, although the criteria can be clearly distinguished in theory, in practice they are aspects of an integrated experience. The components do not make sense as a description of collective purpose except when each is considered in relation to each of the others; and we cannot compensate for a failure to meet one of the criteria through a greater success in meeting another of them.

Secondly, that which constitutes success or failure in meeting the criteria is not objectively determined. The judgements presented here are opinions, not facts.



The dynamics of social co-ordination

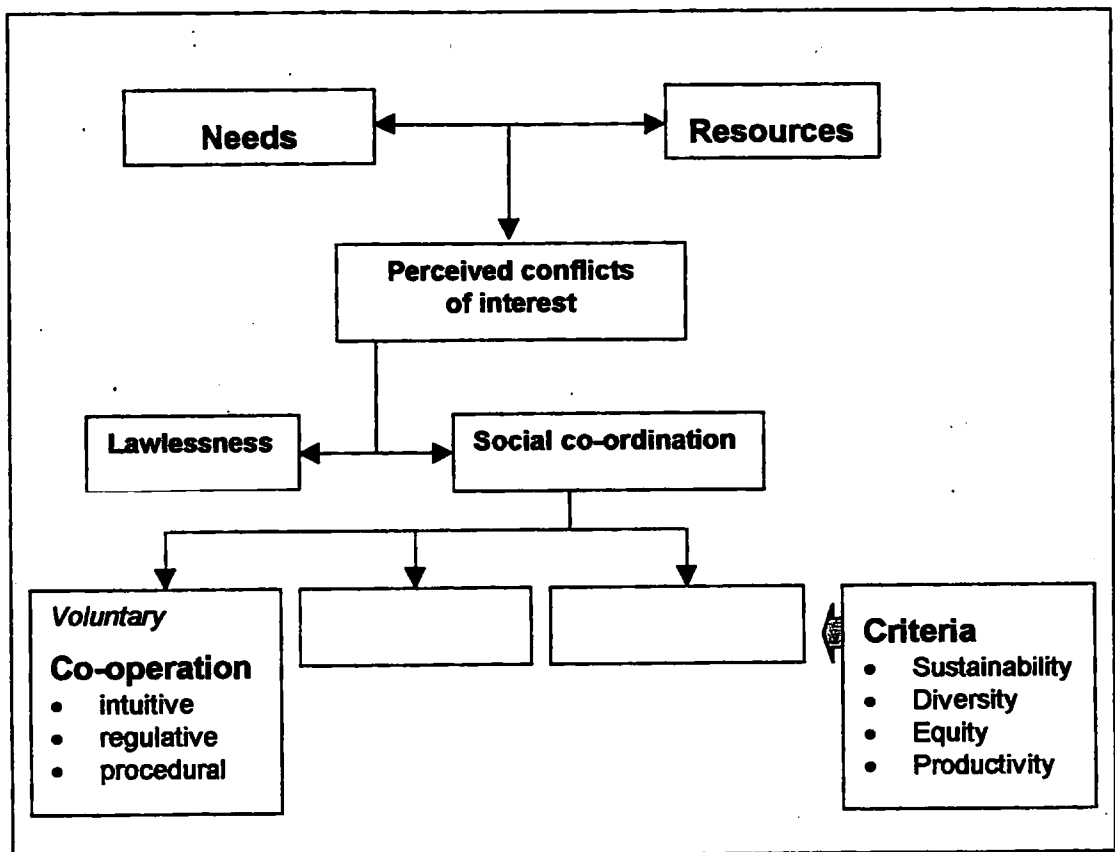
The first choice to be made is between some form of social co-ordination and an unregulated war of all against all. Since the latter seems highly unlikely to meet any of the criteria, it will be assumed that some form of social co-ordination is required; and so it is possible to move swiftly on to the second question; whether social co-ordination should be voluntary or involuntary.

There is immediate appeal in the idea of voluntary co-ordination, or *co-operation* as it will be labelled here. The idea that we should resolve competition over resources through negotiation seems to be the simplest and most direct way of accomplishing our purposes. Each of the criteria can be met in this way, even though the approach is not without its inherent problems.

However, co-operation is not a simple set of behaviours, and distinctions between forms of co-operation can be useful. The first of these forms occurs when when it is obviously in our immediate interests to work together. This may be called *intuitive co-operation*.

We can, of course, continue to co-operate even when our interests don't immediately coincide. We can choose to act in such a way as we believe it would be best for everyone to act, even when it is not particularly convenient to do so. Because such behaviour commonly involves establishing a set of agreements about the nature of such behaviour, it can be called *regulative co-operation*; though the form of regulation may range from inexplicit local conventions to international law.

Indeed, in this context, it is self-evident that the rules, whether explicit or implicit, statutory or normative, must be willingly accepted if co-operation is to remain voluntary. Since this implies that everyone who is affected by a decision has a right to a voice in the decision-making process proportional to their interest, this third aspect of co-operation may be described as *procedural co-operation*.



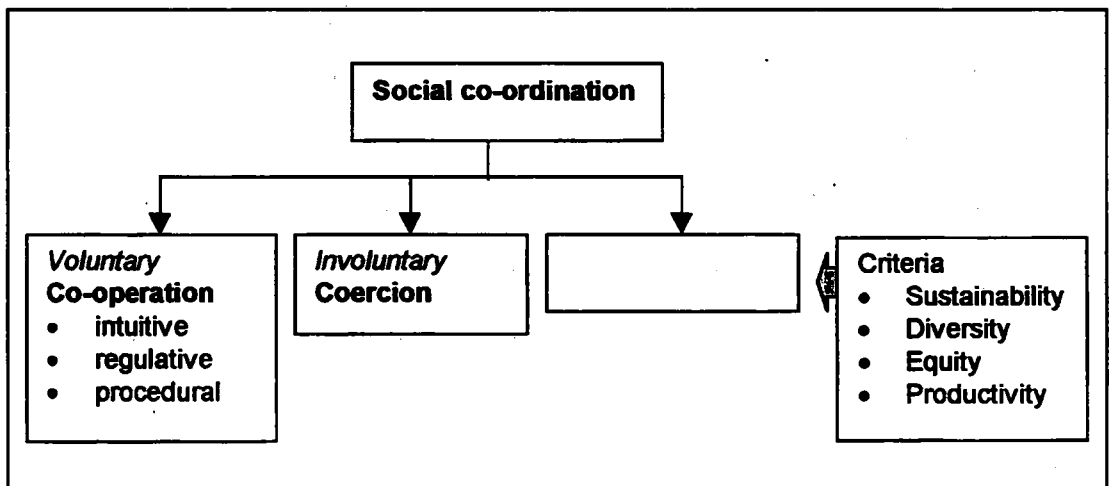
Coercion

The immediate alternative to the voluntary co-ordination of social life is coercion; that is, involuntary co-ordination. The argument is that because people are lazy, selfish and greedy, they have to be told what to do for their own benefit.

This argument doesn't really stand up when we compare our experience of coercive systems with the criteria that have been stated here. Such systems tend to be *unproductive* because social organisation is too complex for any elite to make consistently appropriate decisions. They fail to meet the criterion of *diversity*, because individuals cannot make their own choices. They may start with ideals of *equity*, but

since the ruling group is unaccountable, this criterion too is soon neglected; and the costs of maintaining such an unresponsive system tend to make it *unsustainable* quite rapidly.

This is not to say that we can necessarily co-ordinate our activities entirely without coercion: a point which will be discussed a little later.



Market ideology - the invisible hand

At this point it is tempting to suggest that all social systems are simply a mixture of co-operative and coercive dynamics, but there is a school of thought which suggests that the analysis used here is inadequate: that there is an additional factor which has not been taken into account.

The additional factor is the invisible hand, and the ideology that espouses it is commonly, and rather misleadingly, known as 'market theory'. This label is misleading because it co-opts the term *market*, and attaches it to a mechanism known as the

invisible hand, which is supposed to magically transform the pursuit of self-interest into the common good.

The virtues of the market - its productivity and the diversity it encourages - are not, however, dependent on the invisible hand or on 'market theory'. The essence of the market is not the ideology that claims we need have only minimal concern for each other, but the division of labour, the appropriate allocation of resources, and the benefits of exchange: and these are all quite amenable to co-operative forms of social co-ordination. If we relied only on what we could produce for ourselves, our productivity would be woefully low. Through the division of labour and exchange, we can increase the quality, quantity and diversity of our productivity. This is not a contentious point. There is no reason why co-operators should not be in favour of markets, in the sense of *institutions for facilitating exchange*. What is at issue is how we can ensure that the process is reasonably equitable.

To market ideologists, this is not a problem. If everyone specialises and then trades what they have produced in the market, it is argued, there is an incentive for everyone to produce what best meets other people's needs; and since you can only trade what you have produced, each person finds themselves entitled to neither more nor less than they deserve.

The greatest beauty of the system is that it is automatic; or, in the imagery associated with the ideology, that 'it is guided by an invisible hand'. There is, therefore, no need for deliberate intervention to achieve equity. Social co-ordination can take place entirely through the market process, in which the pursuit of self-interest is magically transformed into the general common good.

Would that this were so.

Firstly, it is not the case that everyone gets what they deserve. We do not all have the same opportunities. Those of us who are provided with health and education, and access to capital, information and influence have a consistent advantage over those who do not. The result is that a market organised according to the invisible hand ideology leads to an intensifying differentiation that is quite clearly based more on the chance of birth than on merit.

Secondly, the idea that we do not need to accept any responsibility for each other (beyond the negative responsibility of not seeking actively to harm or deceive others) encourages us to look at each other as objects and as opportunities for exploitation. Market ideology leads to social fragmentation and alienation.

Thirdly, the idea that we have no positive responsibilities to each other encourages us to try to avoid the true costs of our productive activities. A consequence of market ideology is a noticeable tendency to neglect our social and environmental responsibilities.

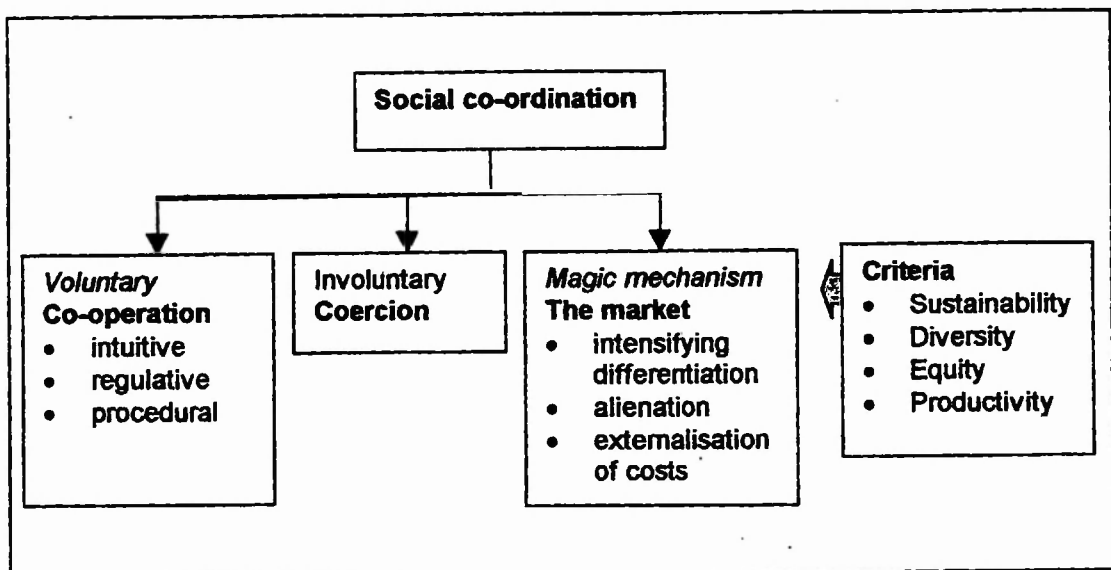
When market ideology is compared to the criteria, therefore, a mixed picture emerges.

In terms of the *production* of some types of resources, most notably those which meet our material needs, market ideology appears to be very effective. However, it also appears to be destructive of the resources which help us to satisfy our social and spiritual needs, so that although allowing a great deal of *diversity* in some respects, from a broader perspective it is not clear that it meets either of these criteria adequately.

In terms of *sustainability* there is an equal degree of ambiguity. While innovation and ingenuity certainly seem to flourish under such a fluid system, experience suggests that environmental and social costs are allocated effectively only through coercive or co-operative measures, and not through the market itself. Sustainability is only maintained under market ideology by acting in a manner contrary to that ideology.

There can be little doubt about the fourth criterion, however. The market is not a magic mechanism that transforms self-interest into the collective good, nor is there an invisible hand to guide the market so that everyone gets what they deserve. No society in which the central dynamic is market ideology has a significant chance of achieving *equity*.

Nevertheless, because of the high cost of determining outcomes in advance, co-operators may at times appear to rely on market forces to determine fair distribution. One would expect them to seek confirmation that justice rather than expediency was being served; but, as with coercion, a certain interdependency between the dynamics is implied.



The failures of co-operation

It may have been noticeable that while the failures of coercion and market ideology have been dwelt on, those of co-operation have not been specified.

In a sense, the problems have already been identified, however. They are, on the one hand, that we cannot rely on everyone to co-operate; and on the other, that the transaction costs of discovering the total circumstances of any exchange would be so great as to prevent most of them taking place. These problems may be tagged as *non-co-operation* and *scale*; and it may be noted that these are the problems which coercion and the invisible hand supposedly address.

In this way it becomes apparent why the three dynamics are not, in practice, mutually exclusive.

Consider coercion in relation to co-operation. In the first place, there is no absolute standard which allows us to determine where persuasion stops and coercion begins, despite the poles being clearly distinguishable. Nor can the argument that 'there will always be some people who behave intolerably' be rejected out of hand.

There is, however, a crucial distinction between relying on coercion as the central dynamic of a society, and using it as a regrettable necessity. Instead of being universal and self-reinforcing, coercion in these circumstances is used reluctantly and defensively, as a last resort; reformatively, rather than vengefully; and not impulsively, but on the basis of agreed norms of what constitutes intolerable behaviour - norms that have been agreed through co-operative procedures.

Similarly, as has already been noted, co-operators are likely to find themselves using some approximation of a market ideology; a temporary assumption that an exchange is equitable, simply because it may well be too costly to investigate all the potential consequences of our transactions before we undertake them. The distinction is that co-operators do not attempt to absolve themselves of responsibility for those consequences.

There is, instead, an acceptance that inequities affecting and being intensified by such exchanges must be identified through procedural co-operation, and compensatory mechanisms instituted through cultural or political means.

Symmetry

The likelihood thus seems to be that even in an essentially co-operative society, both coercion and market ideology will have a part to play. One series of possible deductions is that

- each dynamic deals with the problems of the other two;
- there is a symmetrical relationship between the dynamics:
- and that, therefore, any practical form of social co-ordination will incorporate elements of each of the dynamics.

The first and third observations seem to reflect experience, but the second does not appear to be correct. There is not, in the end, symmetry between the three dynamics.

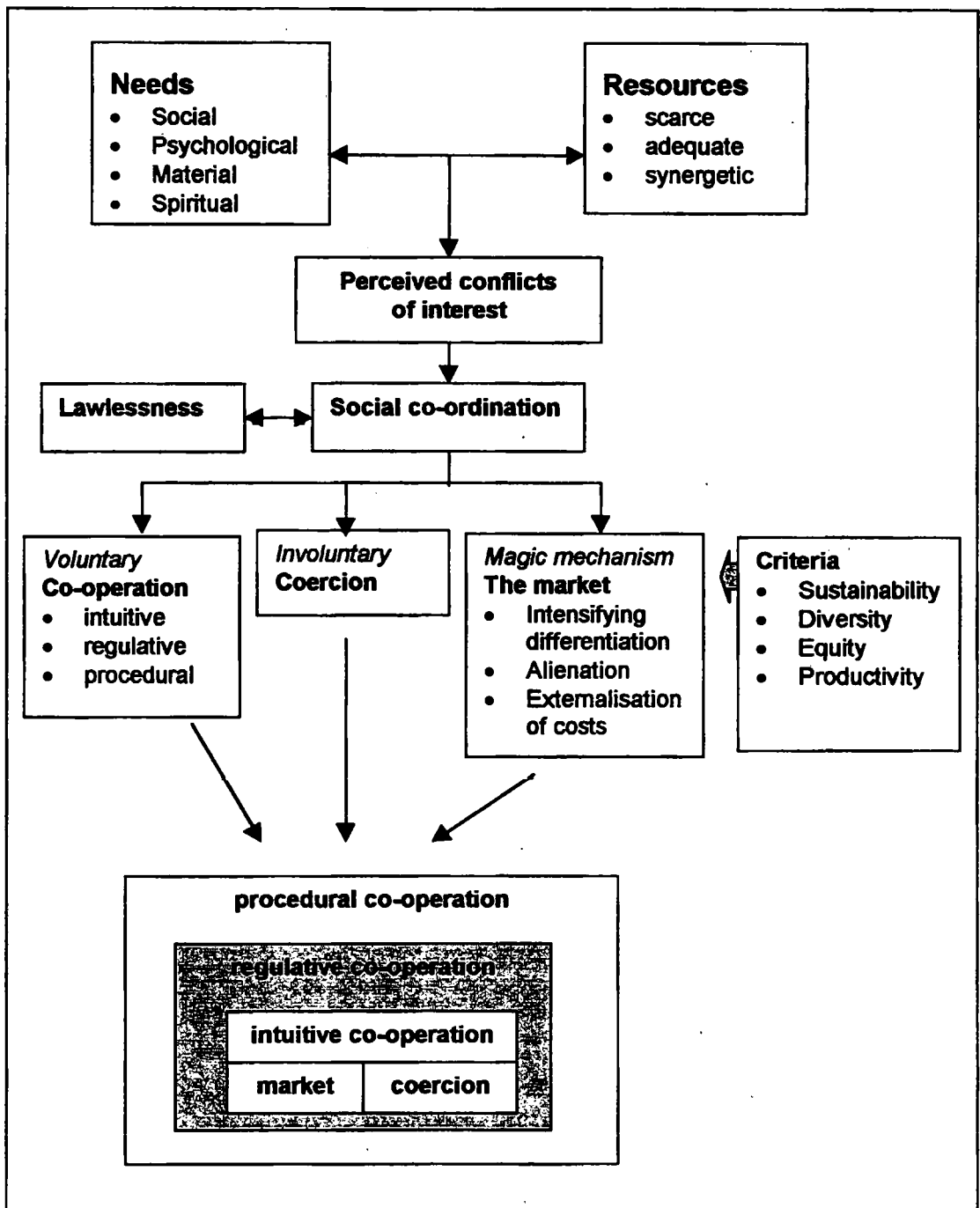
When we seek to integrate them, we do so by assessing the way in which the strengths of one compensate for the failures of another. The symmetry breaks down at this point because neither the market ideology nor coercion is capable of managing a

sustainable equilibrium. Coercion is directly opposed to co-operation and destructive of the flexibility of the market, which is its primary virtue. The free market, through its tendency towards intensifying differentiation, creates inequities which require coercive measures if radical instability is not to arise; an instability which is reinforced by the demeaning of social solidarity. At the same time, the free market, through its tendency towards monopoly is even destructive of itself, and of the trust and social solidarity on which both it and co-operation depend.

Thus, if an equilibrium between the three dynamics is to be sustained, with the aim of optimising our capacity to meet our welfare criteria, we must rely on our capacity to negotiate the construction of our social institutions. Procedural co-operation, in which everyone has a voice to decide the rules, must be given priority, and the authority to decide when coercion is justifiable, and when market exchange has been inequitable.

The relationship between the dynamics is not therefore seen as symmetrical.

Precedence must be given to procedural co-operation.



A footnote: Liberal democracy and other hybrids

The similarities between this conclusion and the traditions of liberal democracy do not disqualify the argument as a recommendation of co-operation; nor do they indicate that the policies which are undertaken in the name of liberal democracy meet the criteria expressed here.

Within such polities, it is commonplace for both coercion and the invisible hand to be presented as dynamics which are intrinsically justified, while the argument offered here suggests that their use is only acceptable within a framework of regulation in which everyone who is affected has a voice.

Obviously, perfectly balanced negotiations are an unattainable ideal; but perfection being beyond our grasp is not a reason for giving up entirely, or for substituting for procedural co-operation one or other of two dynamics which we know to be intrinsically incapable of meeting our objectives.

A different set of responses is indicated. The whole web of implications cannot be stated briefly, but some possibilities can be illustrated. (Incidentally, they appear to defuse several commonplace criticisms of co-operation.)

Our educational systems should develop our skills of holistic interaction, and stress the often neglected recognition that each individual is dependent on their social environment for the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Everything we do is built on the efforts of others.

Simultaneously, utopianism must give way to a recognition that some measure of coercion may be inescapable, and some measure of market exchange acceptable. What is crucial is that the operational parameters of these measures should be decided collectively.

Leadership, for example, need not be coercive. When someone is able to provide an imaginative blending of what each of us desires, and is prepared to abjure the opportunity to perpetuate their influence through the abuse of power and denial of opportunity to others, leadership can be a creative response to the problems of scale.

Nor is there good reason to refuse to reward particular classes of action. Incentives are not intrinsically vicious. It is only when their distribution arises from inequity of the power to define merit that motivation through differential reward becomes obscene. Furthermore, encouragement to make positive contributions may be preferable to punishing deviance as a response to those who are reluctant to participate responsibly in the community.

Strategies which are hybrids of the three dynamics are potentially valuable, and possibly essential; but the central issue remains the same. The hybrids, just as much as raw coercion and imperfect markets, become dysfunctional unless their uses remain subordinate to the collective voice of procedural co-operation.

In conclusion

It will probably have been noted that this analysis places immense importance on our capacity to construct our environment through mutual understanding.

This is intentional. There are certainly physical constraints, which may be absolute, on what we can achieve, but there are also huge opportunities for us to achieve the aim of offering to each individual a fair chance to satisfy their needs, across the whole range from spiritual to material, to whatever extent is possible without preventing others from doing the same.

If the principal component of this achievement is learning to listen without fear, express ourselves honestly, and reach agreements, there is plenty of evidence that these skills are not beyond our capacity.

12. Validation

That, then, is the rationale of the primacy of co-operation in social organisation which emerged from the first and second stages of legitimation.

Although the interviews that comprised the second stage will be discussed in due course, the next sections will deal with the validation process. In the methodological discussion, validation was seen as focussing on internal consistency, critical challenge, and empirical evidence. Consistency is a fairly straightforward criterion. Critical challenge is made in awareness that academic rigour demands that we be individually and collectively self-critical [Gregory, 1990], since "at some level, the sociologist must identify - either positively or negatively - with her object of investigation." [Eyerman and Jamison, 1991:40]. Empirical evidence is offered, though, of course, at times this is evidence not of quantifiable phenomena, but that people have used a compatible way of thinking of these issues.

Needs

Amongst the terms which are used fairly interchangeably in common language are *to need, to want, to crave, to yearn, to desire, and to wish*. There is a common distinction, too: that which we are said to need is sometimes contextualised as being in some way more real or essential than that for which we simply wish. A practical consequence of this is that definition of a claim as a need will often bear with it the idea of entitlement, which is not the case with that for which we merely yearn. The covert message of such a distinction is that there is a criterion which allows us to

distinguish between the two sets of emotions; but exactly what that criterion is tends to remain debatable.

Nevertheless, four types of criterion can fairly readily be identified, however. These can be referred to respectively as *objective*, *market determined*, *idiosyncratic* and *normative*. The labels represent the following ideas.

that there is a set of needs which is objective and universal, and that what is wanted beyond that is more than can be reasonably demanded;

that there is a continuum between needs and wants which can be inferred from market behaviour;

that the distinction is purely idiosyncratic, and inaccessible to external assessment;

that the distinction between what one needs and what one merely wants is relative to cultural constructs.

A difficulty arises in that these categories can be mixed within an ideology. For example, one could argue rationally that needs are those urges which can be objectively identified and bear entitlements, while desires are idiosyncratic and our own responsibility. Furthermore, the idiosyncrasy of desire can be hallowed as sets of autonomic projects [Williams, 1988; Nozick, 1968]; or it can be argued that desires are culturally or biologically determined [Galbraith, 1968, 1974; Dawkins, 1976], but inaccessible to objective identification due to their complexity.

An ineluctable tide draws the argument towards the quagmire of motive. What makes us want things? Inevitably this is a favourite playground of the psychologist, and perhaps equally inevitably, it is a playground in which incommensurability is the predominant style. In a quagmire the predominant style is *saute qui peut*.

Using Rorty's paradigm, one might seek to agree what would constitute adequate data to decide between alternative conceptions, but such agreement does not seem to have been achieved. Indeed, the point seems indeterminable, if one considers three problems:

1. How could we reliably distinguish between a measure of precognition and free will?²
2. We cannot speak intelligibly (within the conventional western academic discourse) of how a human would behave if they were without corporeal substance.
3. How could we communicate with someone who had not been subjected to environmental influence; and without that communication, would any commentary on their behaviour be adequate? (This is, of course, a reflection of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle.)

To indicate briefly, then, some of the incompatible but underdeterminable responses to the question of motivation, one might select simply amongst the biological school of motivational theorists, whose preferred data ranges from dreams to genes. There is Freudian bio-cognitive determinism, as expressed in *The Ego and the Id* [1962]; the genetic determinist, represented by Barash's *Sociobiology: the whispering within*

² I have discussed the problem of self-determination elsewhere, and concluded that while Ryle's Plotinian argument [Ryle, 1963] must throw considerable doubt on the plausibility of such a position, we have little alternative but to construct our beliefs as if we have free will. Indeed, this empirical conclusion may be the best or only evidence of free will that is available. A debate with Rose on this issue in the context of personal change is presently a welcome stimulus [Rose, 1996].

[1980] and Dawkin's *The Selfish Gene* [1976]; or Maturana and Varela's *The Tree of Knowledge* [1988].

An alternative form of determinism is found in the behaviourist school associated with Watson [*Behaviourism*, 1924] or Skinner [*About Behaviourism*, 1974]. For this school, neutral observation of stimulus and response provides the requisite evidence: but for those who believe that the environment's influence operates through an intervening cognitive mechanism, such as Goffman [*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1969] and Harré and Secord [*The Explanation of Social Behaviour*, 1972], personal reports are central to interpretation. Similarly, Kelly's theory of personal constructs suggests that we are guided by a personal mode of construing the world, and that environmental data are definitely subordinate to an awareness of such constructions [Adams-Webber, 1979:1-11].

Perhaps the most useful context for the discussion, in view of the incommensurability of these conceptions, is philosophical; but even those who have committed themselves to a study of the issues seem baffled. There is not even agreement on whether there is an entity - the self - to which desires can be attributed in a coherent manner.

Parfit's thought experiments sought to describe a thinker, as distinct from the continuity of thought which is all that the Plotinian view concedes [Clark, 1991]. Courageously undermining his own attempts, Parfit declared that such an effort might be technically and possibly deeply impossible [Parfit, 1986:219]. Wilkes came to no clearer a conclusion:

The 'unity' and 'continuity' that the condition of consciousness was *inter alia* trying to supply was, in so far as we do enjoy such unity and

continuity, adequately explained by the requirements of rational and purposeful activity in a complex social environment, and by the interplay of the many faculties of the human organism. [Wilkes, 1988:231]

In the face of such uncertainty, it seems reasonable to suggest that each theory of motivation is underdetermined, in Lukes' sense of the word: "theories may be incompatible with each other and yet compatible with all possible data." [Lukes, 1981:396] If we accept this view, how are we then to proceed to understand needs?

In the first place, within the sceptical perspective, it is possible to dismiss the objectivist argument. We do not need to enter the

fictional non-existing world constructed by the scientific observer - yet another imperialistic imposition which does little more than reflect the preconceptions and interests of the social scientists involved.[Schutz cited in Doyal And Gough, 1991:19]

Benn and Peters seek a way round this by suggesting that there are objective public needs with a superstructure of private needs. The support they offer for the idea of objective needs is to argue that the need for a pair of spectacles is not normative [Benn and Peters, 1959:141]. This is, in itself, debatable; if not through norms, how might we identify a need that carries with it an obligation to others? or if there is no obligation, of what relevance is the distinction between public and private needs? Policy shifts in Britain since the time of writing have clearly reallocated spectacles from a public provision to the private sector, except for the means-tested few. To support their argument, Benn and Peters would have to show that those needs which imply an obligation to others are distinguished other than normatively, which they have failed to do.

A more fundamental point emerges from this controversy. It is possible to be aware of a distinction without being able to allocate phenomena to particular categories.

Although we may be able to assert that there are circumstances which give rise to that which may be categorised as an essential need, we cannot infer that the categories of needs and wishes are clearly distinct. A hierarchy of needs seems a reasonable response to this problem, though, as will be seen, there are difficulties with this; and even the superficially most objective of needs remains culturally determined. To a Buddhist, "all phenomena of the universe coming and going momentarily and unceasingly at all times are illusory and unreal." [Hsu Heng Chi, 1989:4] Our conception of needs is due to our attachment to the egotistical illusion, while "in dharma there is no self" [*ibid*]. Even survival needs imply a normative or personal assumption.

Can the idea of objective needs thus be discarded as unproven and impractical? In addition to the points just made, pragmatism suggests that the utility of such a viewpoint is low, since it would underwrite the authoritarian structuring of society. [To write "an ethical pragmatism rooted in sceptical premises" each time would be tedious for both writer and reader. *Pragmatism* will be taken henceforth to refer to the position that has been elaborated earlier in the text.]

An ingenious way of bypassing these objections is sometimes put forward, however. It can be argued that we indicate our needs through our market decisions. This is, of course, a highly reductive and abstract argument, dependent on the assumption that those who have authentic and justifiable needs will always have the power to bring forth an appropriate supply. In the first place, there is a false assumption that there are no structural obstructions to converting a perception of need into effective demand. In the second place, capitalist industrialism has an evident interest in creating needs -

indeed, may even be argued to be dependent on the creation of a state of perpetual dissatisfaction.

Veblen, in opposition to the 'demand calls forth supply' formula, pointed to the extrinsic nature of needs nearly a hundred years ago:

wants and desires, the end and aim, the ways and means the amplitude and drift of the individual's conduct are functions of an institutional variable that is of a highly complex and wholly unstable character.

[Veblen, 1984:180]

More recently, the same issue has been raised by Galbraith [1968], who pays considerable attention to the notion of interruptions to the accepted sequence of events between demand and supply;

..persuasion helps to accord serious importance to frivolous wants. It makes the taste or crispy sensation of the imaginative breakfast food important...it gives similar meaning to other meaningless products. Thus it helps to conceal the tendency, with increasing production, to increasing unimportance. [Galbraith, 1974:158].

Robinson, too, shares this view, having written that "No-one who has lived in the capitalist world is deceived by the pretence that the market system ensures consumer's sovereignty." [Robinson, 1972:274] For a more complete examination of this position, O'Donnell [1981] can be recommended.

Beyond this clear refutation on the ground that the economic idealist's model has no clear correspondence to experience, there are further difficulties in this route to an objective analysis of needs. To turn to Robinson again,

The first essential for economists ...[is] to combat, not foster, the ideology which pretends that values which can be measured in terms of money are the only ones that ought to count.[*ibid*:14]

If we depend on the analysis of market transactions to identify needs, there is an automatic distortion that exaggerates the perceived significance of the choices of the individually wealthy or of median groups. The manner in which this skews our vision of the world, or leads to infrastructural bias, is complex; but the building of roads for out-of-town retail areas is indicative of how market mediated expressions of preference may be incomplete. Do we want to increase our car dependency? Do we support the predatory pricing that threatens small businesses? The sum of individual short-term rationality may not lead to collective or longer term individual welfare; and the market is not a reliable expression of our needs.

An alternative approach is thus required if we wish to have a practical understanding of needs. The approach that has been adopted here is to take the whole set of perceived needs, wants, wishes and desires, and to seek a taxonomy which seems likely to provide sub-sets appropriate for most people's interpretation of their own experience. Clearly there is a set which encompasses all that anyone at this moment wants; there would appear to be no difficulty with that construct, though movement over time prevents any claim that it could be definitive. The issue of a taxonomic description of the sub-sets requires more caution.

Any way of differentiating experience may be seen as culturally determined; categories are taken to be not aspects of the universe itself but of our conceptions of the universe. The test of an appropriate taxonomy from the point of view of the pragmatist is how useful it is. In this case, utility suggests that it must be acceptable to a wide range of people, without being so bland as to contribute nothing of substance to

the argument for co-operation. Another difficulty is that, if perceived needs are constructed as being infinitely diverse, no taxonomy can be adequate; only a very long list could have any credibility.

Doyal and Gough to some extent follow this line of thought:

...because of the holistic impact of society on human consciousness and on the formulation of what is and what is not a basic need, it is impossible to compare cultures.....In short, human needs are socially relative, and stipulate only what some groups of humans prefer over others. Attempts by those in one culture or social formation to impose their conception of basic needs onto any other is no more than cultural imperialism - the pursuit of specific group interests. [Doyal and Gough, 1991:13]

Their response to this perspective is to argue that

While it may be true that all human goals are specific to particular cultures, in order to achieve any of these goals people have to act. It follows that there are certain preconditions for such actions to be undertaken - people must have the mental ability to deliberate and to choose, and the physical capacity to follow through on their decisions. [Doyal and Gough, 1986:69]

There are several difficulties to this approach, however appealing its conclusions may be; to wit, that enablement is the only justifiable response to a recognition of others' needs. Firstly, there is a cultural assumption that people desire autonomy, so that Doyal and Gough are liable to the challenge that an imposed autonomy is just as much an authoritarian act as any other. To attribute a universal desire for autonomy is itself, in their terms, "no more than cultural imperialism". Secondly, there is a rather blurred categorial error. This can be clarified in the first place by referring to Max-Neef's distinction between needs and satisfactions, which is also helpful in other

respects. Needs may be considered to be universal to humans, or at least widely discernible, while the satisfactions of those needs may be very diverse. [Max-Neef, 1986:49] For example, it can be argued that we all have a need for affection, but that in some people that need will be satisfied by the companionship of a bearded collie, while for others, nothing short of an extended family in a stable community will do. If we accept that distinction, satisfactions are those experiences which have an intrinsic capacity to meet a need.

Applying this perspective to Doyal and Gough's argument, it may be seen that particular forms of empowerment are an attempt to satisfy their perception of a second order need for autonomy. (A second order need is one which is felt not because of the intrinsic value of its being met, but because it allows one to satisfy a first order need.) By privileging this set of selected satisfactions, they are imposing resource priorities which are not attributable to any negotiated decision. Can they assert with absolute certainty that we would always demand autonomy before we demanded food security? Their argument can therefore be seen as a useful contribution, but one that must be handled with care: its conclusions may be at odds with its premises.

Maslow's approach is markedly different. The hierarchical structure he offers presents a base of physiological needs, a second layer of safety needs, followed by belongingness and love, and the penultimate set; the need for esteem. All of these are termed deficiency needs, without which there is little chance of achieving the culminating glory of self-actualisation - becoming everything one is capable of becoming [Maslow, 1970].

His approach has several flaws. In the first place, he assumed self-actualisation as a category, identified those he believed had attained it, and sought the shared characteristics of that group. This is problematic in its circularity [Stevens, 1981:73], but, as has been argued, this is not an insurmountable challenge in itself. To seek evidence we must always make a set of assumptions. The problem lies rather, it may be thought, in the identification of needs as a hierarchy, with an individualistic glory as the peak of human development. Maslow sought to defuse this problem by arguing that the distinction between selfishness and unselfishness disappears when it is recognised "the most ethical and moral of people are also the lustiest and most animal." [Maslow, 1970:179]

Maslow's argument remains highly conjectural, and, from a pragmatic point of view, potentially very damaging. Several difficulties arise from his adoption of a hierarchical view. In the first place, this approach encourages an understanding that those who are self-actualised are superior to all others. If it were to be adopted as a personal paradigm, it would seem likely to promote the ruthlessness and coldness that was often identified as a characteristic of Maslow's group by others [Stevens, 1981:73]. An alternative view of the peak of human development might be found in the Buddhist philosophy that all dharmas [ways of righteousness] are without self [Hsu Heng Chi, 1989:4]. There is nothing intrinsically necessary about Maslow's choice of self-actualisation as the apex of the hierarchy.

Nor, of course, is it necessary to make use of a hierarchy at all to describe needs. There is a failure to distinguish between urgency and importance in the view that one level must be satisfied before the next becomes significant. A more useful model might be one in which it was recognised that the saliency of various needs varies over time, for a variety of reasons, which includes physiological imperatives. Apart from

freeing sympathetic needs from their subordination to the autonomic, there is another pragmatic advantage in the non-hierarchical approach. If it is taken that lower order needs are never entirely satisfied, or can easily be stimulated by a consumerist culture, there is implicit in Maslow's hierarchical metaphor an encouragement to neglect the higher order social needs in the pursuit of baser gratifications [Weisskopf, 1973:178].

Early writers on economic man allowed him - and though only by implication, her - higher non-material needs. Gradually these were lost sight of, because economists only knew how to analyse lower needs.

Finally their very existence was denied. [Walker, 1989:9]

The implications for the global community will be elaborated in due course; but to indicate the train of thought, a focus on material needs can be painfully and unsustainably resource intensive.

For these reasons the hierarchical view is also rejected. The range of needs identified by Maslow is nevertheless consistent with the view preferred here, as is the non-hierarchical analysis of Mallman, who offers autonomy, identity, affection, participation, understanding, protection, sustenance, play, and creativity [adapted from Max-Neef, 1986:49]. In the research undertaken here, and in teaching in prison, I found Mallman's list to be too cumbersome and too specific for easy internalisation. Nevertheless, if political inferences are to be made, some attempt to subdivide the whole set of human needs is required. Some intermediary taxonomy would seem to be appropriate.

Erikson may act as the source of a suitable analysis. He described human well-being as resulting from the integrated satisfaction of our needs in the social, psychological, and somatic domains [Erikson, 1977]. Several of those with whom I have spoken are,

however, reluctant to subsume the spiritual within the psychological, and the point seems irresolvable. For every one such there is probably another who will deny a metaphysical aspect to humanity (remember that, to Maturana, love is a biological phenomenon [Maturana, 1991:89]).

The taxonomy of the whole set of needs that is used, therefore, consists in three or four subsets: social, material, psychological, and spiritual [?] needs. This analysis appears to be sustainable in the context of other theoretical constructions, and potentially useful through its influence on the argument for co-operation.

Resources

The term *resource* is used here in the sense offered by *The Oxford Etymological Dictionary*: a resource is a means of supplying a want. In the context of this argument, this reference allows a neat symmetry. We have needs; that which can be used to meet a need is a resource.

There are evident objections to this. If we consider the set of social or psychological needs, the model constructed here could seem to be an incitement to exploit other people. On further consideration, however, it is possible to see that this is not a necessary implication; indeed, when the class of synergetic resources is considered, it may be seen that such a reading is unsustainable. Put simply, win/win outcomes allow us to meet our needs through others while providing the same service for them [Levin and Desjardins, 1970: Davis, 1983]. Despite the adequacy of this response, however, some further explanation of the use of the terms may be helpful.

Scarcity of resources does not seem to offer any immediate problems as a construct. Since at least the Club of Rome report of more than twenty years ago [Meadows *et al*, 1972], which incorporated the recognition that certain resources are finite, and demands made upon them extreme, the notion of resource scarcity has been a common theme. Even before this, Carson's *Silent Spring* [1968] helped raise the issue of the self-destructive behaviour of capitalist consumer society. The Brundtland report [1987] contributed further to the debate, in particular by emphasising the notion of inter-generational justice.

There have been arguments offered to suggest that scarcity is an irrelevant concept. This seems usually to be based on the notion that technological advance allows more to be produced from less; but while technological advances can undoubtedly improve resource utilisation, estimates of future demand and technological advances remain purely speculative, and our present circumstances continue to be constrained by scarcities of, for example, pure water.

Associated with technological optimism, is the view that resource management is simply a matter of getting the price right. A number of texts under the general heading *Blueprint for a Green Planet* [Pearce, Markyanda, and Barbier, 1989] have contributed to the understanding of how more resource costs can be internalised effectively into industrial practice. For example, the notion that *the polluter pays* has become a popular maxim. Nevertheless, scarcity management is a recognition, not a refutation, of the limitations of the resource base. Thus, the scarcity of resources is recognised as an ever-present phenomenon even if one accepts the debatable premises

that the market is the appropriate medium of social organisation;

that the complexity of allocating and internalising costs is not beyond our management;

and that the human resource intensity of measuring non-market values is acceptable.

At this juncture it is possible to imagine economists preening their collective selves, since economics is often predicated as the allocation of scarce resources between human units whose rationality leads them to make infinite demands on, by implication, scarce resources. In many ways the most interesting aspect of this argument, however, is that it is centred on a one-dimensional view of human behaviour. Rational economic individuals are seen as constraining their greed only because

each person knows that the choice between any such collusive arrangement and the breakdown position is a matter of co-operation since the former is better for both. [Sen, 1991:132]

Nor is it possible to prove that this is not the case. The possibility of altruism is purely hypothetical. Any action can be subsumed within the motive of self-interest by following the notion that love of self is ameliorated only by the need for the approval of others. Rawls has expressed this cynicism clearly:

What moves men are various interests, the desires for power, prestige, wealth and the like. Although they are clever at producing moral arguments to support their claims, between one situation and another their opinions do not fit into a coherent conception of justice. Rather their views at any given time are occasional pieces calculated to advance certain interests. [Rawls, 1972:386]

Thus the scarcity of resources can be viewed as endemic, owing to human greed. A less ego-centric construction, however can be placed on social and psychological needs:

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. [Smith,1759:9]

If we take pleasure from the pleasures of others, synergy, and, by implication, adequacy are possible.

An interesting example of this might be the redistribution of food resources in the world. The planet apparently has sufficient resources to feed the present population, but the gross overconsumption of resource intensive food products in one part of the world distorts the opportunities of others to survive [Oxfam, 1995]. In this sense, it is clear that these resources could be considered adequate as easily as scarce, in a global context. Distribution is the problem; or, arguably, lack of motivation in the absence of maldistribution.

This is the crucial problem; to what extent are the concerns of others our concern too? One does not need to take the strong line of Singer, who felt no need to take account of proximity and distance in his moral calculus [Singer, 1987:24]. If we accept only that we have a less than infinite capacity for compassion, we are likely to remain more affected by immediate than by distant joy or misfortune. Nevertheless, a simple belief that one's own life is degraded by the avoidable misery of others and enriched by their innocent well-being is sufficient ground to argue for a re-distribution of global resources. Many now considered scarce could equally be considered adequate if they were differently distributed.

An interesting sidelight on this issue is raised by the prisoner's dilemma model, and a variant known as the Trucking Game. The most beneficial outcome for both

participants is achieved when they co-operate. Under threat, however, there is an increased level of conflictual behaviour [Deutsch and Krauss, 1965]. This reinforces the idea that a cynical view of human motivation is a self-fulfilling ontology. If others are a threat, we tend to get our retaliation in first. It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that where an economic view of rationality prevails, the evidence to support its premises will be created by the belief itself. For example, in free rider experiments, 40% to 60% of most classes of participants resisted the temptation. The exception was economics graduates, of whom 80% took advantage of a free ride at the collective expense. [Marwell and Ames, 1981 *cited in* Etzioni, 1988: 246]. Reciprocally, empathic behaviour might increase in those circumstances in which the potential consequences of selfless behaviour are evinced by practice.

That this perspective is the more comprehensive rationality in terms of welfare and the satisfaction of needs is reinforced if a further notion relative to resources is accepted. This contention is that, especially in the case of human resources, there is a synergetic cycle, in which the total availability of a resource is not diminished by its use, but increased. To take a simple, intuitive example: where a friendly response predominates within a culture, the opportunities for reducing personal defensiveness creates a positive feedback cycle [Rogers, 1990a]. A less individualistic analysis might suggest that the understanding and estimation of the self is rooted in the way we are constructed within a culture [Mead, 1943]. Since that culture is also a product of our behaviour, attitudes and expressions, it is easy to see how a positive environment can lead to esteem for the self as a member of a community, which reinforces the motivation to contribute positively to the positive environment.

Two important qualifications must be made. Firstly, that, at the individual level, synergy may be less evident. Being friendly can be exhausting. The contribution to a

collective fund of goodwill, on the other hand, suggests that support from other sources will be regenerative. Secondly, non-critical regard [Roger, 1990b] cannot be thought of as a universal panacea, at least if the arguments of writers such as Argyris and Schön are given credence. Starting from the premise that human organisations need to adapt to changing circumstances, they have argued that organisational cultures can be hostile to open debate about change [Argyris, 1992]. A positive environment might therefore be seen as one in which mutual criticism is interpreted not as a personal challenge, but as an opportunity for mutual growth.

The case for synergetic resources is not entirely dependent on the acceptance of empathic benefits. Creativity seems to meet similar criteria, in that one individual's genius can readily be the trigger for productivity in another, if only by contributing to a culture in which the unconventional is recognised as a potential source of common benefit [Hudson, 1968].

The idea of synergy has a recursive function in relation to the constructs used here: the idea helps to explain why the idea is not always understood. The widespread perception of the world as a battleground between groups and individuals competing for scarce resources is a paradigm within which people may become locked. Within that context they will not experience synergy, yet prying people loose from this conception is not always a feasible strategy. Empathy can be denied. The resistance to the view that resources are adequate and synergetic as well as scarce is understandable, especially if the argument for self-fulfilling ontologies is accepted.

The importance of synergy is far-reaching, since, if satisfactions can be substituted, a rational cultural perspective might shift attention from intensive use of scarce resources towards those satisfactions which are derived from synergetic resources;

but what evidence could persuade those who do not share this *weltanschauung* remains a mystery.

A brief note on individualistic analysis

Using an argument which is strongly based on the importance of social relations, but which is also rooted in an apparently individualistic conception of needs may be seen as inconsistent. Since there is an appeal to systemic thought as well, an explanation may appear to be doubly necessary.

My response is threefold. Are there distinctive social emergents which are not evident in an holistic appreciation of the individual? What reasons are there for selecting a particular point on a hierarchy through which to enter an analysis? And can welfare be identified separately from individual experience?

To take each of these in turn: the relevance of systemic thought lies in the idea of emergents; if society is the whole, what characteristics does it have that are not evident in, or predictable from, the parts? Interestingly, Blau, who is not specifically a systemist, uses a similar perspective:

The basic social processes that govern associations among men have their roots in primitive psychological processes, such as those underlying the feelings of attraction between individuals and their desires for various kinds of rewards.... The simpler social processes that can be observed in interpersonal associations and that rest directly on psychological dispositions give rise to more complex social processes that govern structures of interconnected social associations, such as the social organisation of a factory or the political relations in a community. New

social forces emerge in the increasingly complex social structures that develop in societies, and these dynamic forces are quite removed from the ultimate psychological base of all social life. [Blau, 1967:20]

Among the emergents that Blau identifies at the level of macro-processes are the significance of value consensus, micro-macro articulation, and the development of enduring institutions.

This is not the place to examine in detail whether he is justified in making these assertions. Nevertheless, one could argue that while there are scalar differences in these respects, they do not justify the term *emergent*. Individuals experience dissonance and conviction, fragmentation and integration, and continuity of identity [Rose and Mathews, 1996]. The continuities, discontinuities, consistencies and discrepancies both within and between individuals makes the internal life and social life to some extent isomorphic in this respect. Similarly, although language might seem to be a pure emergent [Wittgenstein, 1953], it is so internalised that its use becomes an essential aspect of any psychological investigation.

I remain unpersuaded that there are social emergents which are not echoed in any adequate understanding of the individual; though as to whether this is inevitable or not, I remain uncharacteristically diffident. At present, I tend to share the view of Doyal and Harris that socialisation ensures that the structures of the individual reflect the structuring of society. [Doyal and Harris, 1986:80 *et seq.*]

In the second place, that the whole may display emergent characteristics is no reason to ignore the components. Problems will arise, a systemist might argue, if one moves up the hierarchy of systems without recognising emergents, a notion I have no trouble endorsing; but the idea that there is a particular point on the hierarchy from which one

must always start would seem to require substantiation. Rather, as I have already suggested, our experience might be interpreted most effectively by reference to biological and personal variables as well as those which lie in the environment. For evidence, I would point to Marx's social analysis, which asserts that classes are historical phases in the development of production, and that the class struggle must lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat [Marx, 1968:379]; but the lack of substantiation of this thesis may owe quite a lot to a failure to attend to individual motivation within class phenomena.

These are reasons for doubting the necessity of concentrating social analysis on the characteristics of the group; to which may be added that the definition of the group is always to some extent arbitrary or culturally dependent, and that few of us are not influenced by our membership of several groups

A third aspect of my reasoning is semantic and ethical. This construction mirrors Ryle's dictum on the self: society cannot intelligibly be said to exist independently of its constituent members. Built onto this is the ethical consideration. If we accept consequentialism and the Laingian experiential claim (that I cannot experience your experience), we cannot consistently argue that there is a social good which exists independently of the personal experience. To invert this thought is to recognise that the welfare of society is the welfare of its members, present or future, even if at times that implies that an individual benefit has to be subordinated to the collective need. It is not society, however, that must be given precedence, but the welfare of individual others, or, at times, those social phenomena on which others' welfare may depend.

Finally, I have not seen a case made to suggest that the scale of a social group does more than intensify or ease the influence of an emergent. In these circumstances, to

work from the individual to the group, in the awareness that there could be emergent variables, seems an appropriate mode of analysis.

Criteria for the assessment of ideologies

Selecting appropriate criteria to distinguish between ideologies is potentially an immensely difficult point.

Consider a political issue such as autonomy. On the one hand, Nozick and Hayek are amongst those who have presented the view that autonomy is the primary good [Nozick, 1968; Hayek, 1978]. On another hand, Hayek qualified that view [*ibid*, 257], and Nozick repented it:

Democratic institutions and the liberties co-ordinate with them are not simply effective means towards controlling the powers of government and directing these towards matters of joint concern; they themselves express and symbolise.... our equal human dignity, our autonomy and powers of self-direction. [Nozick, 1989:354]

Islam's principal assertion, on the third hand, demands obedience to the will of Allah [Dawood, 1974:5,7]; an ideal expressed in other forms by other religions. If without effort it is possible to list three such diverse views as the primacy of autonomy, a preference for social solidarity (Nozick's later works), and a recommendation of submission to holy will as focal criteria for judging our behaviour, is there any conceivable set which will meet all cases?

Firstly, the aim is not to find a universal set. Mutual accommodation is all that can be expected. Secondly, the methodological criteria of validation to be applied to the

ideological criteria have been set out: theoretical consistency, empirical evidence, and critical challenge.

Of the validation criteria, theoretical consistency can be met by demonstrating that the criteria selected here fit with the ontological, epistemological and ethical commitments that have been declared, and with each other. Empirical evidence and critical challenge are rather more difficult. The most useful validation (as opposed to legitimisation or justification) may lie in the presentation of evidence that the criteria are seen as relevant by other ideologies, while also showing in which respects they diverge.

In checking for consistency, priority might be given to the ethical position; the question being discussed here is not what *is*, since this would be a positivist view, but what *should be*. Let consequential equity, then, be the starting point; and since it has been argued that the ideological criteria are inter-dependent, let its relationships provide the structure.

equity - sustainability: clearly if those who are yet to come are to be considered, sustainability is fundamental to any distribution of resources.

equity - diversity: the argument linking these two criteria has already been explored. In brief, where people have different and varying tastes, equity requires diversity. Sustainability is thus the maintenance of possibilities rather than the stock-piling of consumer durables.

equity - productivity: the idea of productivity as it is used here should not be confused with an ever increasing value of market transactions. In this context, productivity relates to the whole set of needs. Equity is seen as an ethical principle; but practical reasoning endorses its significance. A perceived lack of equity can lead to destructive conflict. Schumacher's comments on right livelihood are also relevant, as they are indicative of the synergy of honest service [Schumacher, 1973:ch1.IV].

Other relationships between the criteria also have to be considered within these ethical parameters. Thus

productivity - sustainability: productivity is constrained by sustainability through the need to allocate scarce resources over time. A conceptual shift towards those needs which are more readily met by synergetic resources may therefore be thought desirable. Accompanying this principle is the recognition that seemingly scarce resources could become adequate if the perceived, or persuaded, need for them could be diminished among those with most power to command them.

productivity - diversity: from all of the arguments above it will be evident that productivity is not seen here as open to measurement by either objective definition, or by aggregation of monetary exchanges. The contribution made by individuals, groups, or the whole set of humans can only be interpreted in terms of the diverse satisfactions that are experienced.

To complete the set:

diversity - sustainability: one clear implication of this relationship is that diversity in our satisfactions is constrained. Sustainability creates limits on our choices. However, since this appears to be our lot in any case, the constraint merely adds to the incentive to seek responsible alternatives to those satisfactions that we may intuitively conceive as necessary. The diversity of possible satisfactions which may be sought in the future suggest that sustainability is concerned with keeping options open, a principle reflected in the now popular notion that biodiversity is in itself a resource. [United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992]. At the same time, the diversity of possible satisfactions creates opportunities, especially in the use of synergetic resources.

This set of assumptions has already been summarised thus: if we are to have a collective aim, it will be *to offer to each individual a fair chance to satisfy their needs, across the whole range from spiritual to material, to whatever extent is possible without preventing others from doing the same.*

It is to be hoped that these elaborations help to show how the ideological criteria are consistent with this aim and with each other. If it also seems that they are in tension, this is not evidence of inconsistency. As was also stated earlier,

although the criteria can be clearly distinguished in theory, in practice they are aspects of an integrated experience. The components do not make sense as a description of collective purpose except when each is considered in relation to each of the others; and we cannot compensate

for a failure to meet one of the criteria through a greater success in meeting another of them.

The prohibition against substitution is a recognition that tensions between the criteria exists. However, in the ideological contextualisation that follows, these tensions appear to be represented either within other ideologies, or in their failures.

Mentioning the possibility of failure inevitably brings a second recurrent issue to the foreground. Success or failure in meeting the criteria, or in finding an appropriate equilibrium between them, is not, of course, thought to be objectively determined.

Some degree of internal consistency has been demonstrated; but what happens when the set of ideological criteria is in contrast to the criteria associated with other models?

There will be no attempt to claim that all ideologies share the same set; to do so would be ludicrous. Even to attempt to list all those which are familiar would be problematic. Instead, some of the recently dominant ideologies are mapped in relation to the selected criteria. The ideologies that have been chosen are market ideology, liberal democracy, and Marxism. To demonstrate the flexibility of the set, the ethos of authoritarianism will also be considered.

Marxism

Marxism is, in theory, clearly in favour of *equity*. This is one of the consistent elements of traditional and neo-Marxist thought. Albert and Hahnel [1978], for example, have shown how, in traditional Marxism, the materialist dialectic leads to an analysis of

class exploitation through the appropriation of labour surplus. However, they then go on to say that

In a sense we see capitalist institutions as potentially moldable to the point where all the contradictions emphasised in orthodox crisis theory can be perpetually postponed. But this is a fundamental dividing line between an historical materialist interpretation of Marx and a praxis oriented interpretation. [*ibid*:81]

Nevertheless, in the latter interpretation, the inequities of capitalist production continue to be a focal point, even if they are now seen as a consequence of the way in which people create themselves and are created by social conditions, rather than as determined by technological progress.

Sustainability in the Marxist analysis is more concerned with social stability than with environmental degradation. The traditional argument of capitalist decay has been recently expressed thus:

The strongest justification for world revolution today is that human kind is literally faced with the long-term dilemma: either World Socialist Federation or Death. [Mandel,1989:180]

Cardoso represents a more modern view, despite retaining an essentially Marxist analytic, though in his case it is international imperialism rather than class conflict which lies at the core of his perception. The combination of desire for development with concern for environmental sustainability and doubts about the sustainability of the international order is compressed into a single statement:

The form of incorporation of the Amazon derives from an international oligopolistic economy which finds in the State (with all its contradictions and conflicts) a basic supporter for rapid accumulation. [Cardoso, 1980:126]

The dependency theory of capitalist expansion reinforces the almost self-evident point that Marxism was concerned from its beginnings with *productivity*. In Frank's dependency arguments, capital accumulation was seen as having a determinant role in the wealth or poverty of nations, and all political activity lies in the dynamics of production and exchange. [Frank, 1978]. If this school is taken to represent a variation of orthodox Marxism [So, 1990:92], it retains the tools of its tradition, which seemed at times to be preoccupied with the cash nexus as a measure of productivity;

the labour theory of value is not a metaphysical notion, despite the impossibility of empirically calculating values, for it expresses definite facts about material life. [Fine, 1989:10]

Perhaps this impression is over-rated by some. Marx expressed clear concerns for other values in his repugnance for commoditisation of human relations, even if many conventional Marxists tend to be overwhelmed by the possibility of achieving an objective social science [eg: Roxborough, 1979:1,59].

While the notion of objectivity has tended to become an embarrassment to Marxists, so too has that of *diversity* and choice. The authoritarian tradition is well-expressed by Myrdal:

Successful economic planning with all its implications of conditioning and directing economic life - and indeed, the prior ability to reach operational agreements - requires a stable and effective, internally united government, conditions of law and order, social discipline, and more generally, national consolidation. [Myrdal, 1968:719]

Lenin would have been proud of him, if his argument for the subordination of each individual to the party is anything to go by. [Lenin, 1966].

Neo-marxists, however, seem to have accepted the evidence that central planning is not the be all and end all. Given the changes in China [Goodman and Segal, 1989] and eastern Europe [Einhorn, 1993; Lewis, 1995; Platteau, 1994] this would be hard to deny, and there is considerable doubt as to whether the centrally planned economy is fundamental to Marxism, or whether a more flexible conception is possible.

Many critics have argued that while capital planning may be effective where there is a single clearly defined aim to be achieved - for example, rapid industrialisation or the construction of a war economy, accompanied by severe constraints on individual consumption, choice of occupation, and so on, which are more or less willingly accepted or imposed upon the population in order to attain the goal - it is less effective in developing the production and distribution of the great range of consumer goods and services characteristic of a modern society. [Bottomore, 1990:64]

Clapham has endorsed this position, and also taken note that it is not merely a question of consumerism. The authority of the state has a cost to the individual which is often expressed in a form of alienation to which Marx did not refer [Clapham, 1992].

Nevertheless, the criteria chosen for the assessment of ideology are evidently relevant, at least, to Marxism. Equity and productivity are central to the story.

Sustainability must be approached with a more dichotomous understanding. There is on the one hand the sustainability of the social form, and on the other of the biosphere on which it depends.

Sustainability was present in the original theory, in the view that crises in successive social arrangements would work themselves out towards the emergence of an ideal communist state. If environmental sustainability was not given the same attention, it is worth noting that the issue was not at the forefront of thought at the time in Europe.

That it is significant within the *weltanschauung* is apparent from the attempts to integrate the theme in various forms of neo-Marxism, such as that expressed by Cardoso.

A similar argument can be put forward for the relevance of diversity. While seemingly antipathetic to such a subjective notion, Marxism, which is far from monolithic, has had within its broad boundaries many who recognised and developed the more libertarian ideals implied in the Communist Manifesto: "Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains." Gramsci displays this tendency as clearly as anyone:

If the relation between intellectuals and the people-nation, between leaders and led, is the result of an organic participation in which feelings and passion become understanding and thence knowledge..then and only then is the relationship one of representation. [Gramsci, 1977:102]

One might go further and suggest that the failure to be aware of these criteria for an ideology contributed to the current decline of Marxism. Any interpretation of the failures of the centrally planned economies would surely have to note, at least implicitly, the lack of diversity as a critical factor; which eventually led to the unsustainability of the system.

The criteria are thus at least not refuted by the Marxist experience; and market ideology offers, willy-nilly, much support for them.

Market ideology

In many ways this is an easier demonstration, in part because of the simplicity of the neo-classical argument. Little has changed since Smith wrote of the *productivity* that could be achieved through the division of labour, and of how the process of exchange

ensured *equity*, since, thanks to the invisible hand, everyone would receive their deserts. In addition, since demand would call forth supply, that the butcher, the baker and the brewer would respond to the *diversity* of the wishes of the consumer [Smith, 1976]. These themes of equity, diversity and productivity married by innate motivation has been echoed by Hayek [1960], Friedman [1973] and others, but the underlying logic remains unchanged. Whether the model bears sufficient relation to human experience to be an adequate ground for a practical ideology is another question which will be addressed later; but three of the criteria are evidently fundamental to the perspective.

Sustainability is a more complex issue. The sustainability of the social systems in which the neo-classical doctrine has historically predominated has been impressive, and clearly a source of pride to its advocates. However, as long as market ideology remains embedded in compensatory mechanisms, as has been the case, the arguments for the self-destructiveness of the pure ideology remain. Fukoyama's triumphalist claim [Fukoyama, 1989] that history is at an end in the global supremacy of market based liberal democracies should not be taken to indicate that it is the market ideology in itself that has outlasted authoritarian communism. Indeed, market democracy, in the constraints and compensation with which it hedges the market, may be seen to represent an underdeveloped co-operative form, rather than a market ideology.

The environmental consequences are altogether another matter. Strictly within the free market model, resources are allocated according to the willingness to pay for them. This creates a set of difficulties associated with the perceived individualistic rationality of externalising costs, and the high transaction costs of ensuring that they are appropriately allocated. At the extreme, where there is a public good with very

diffuse benefits, the market is extraordinarily inefficient. The economic view of this is expressed by Barbier, in his concern that

pervasive and cumulative environmental degradation [could lead] to an absolute constraint if eco-systems are destabilised and essentially collapse. [Barbier,1989:113]

The response has been to recognise this limitation of the free market, so that the ideology becomes more accommodating of intervention.

The overall message of this book is that if sustainability of the ecological processes underlying economic activity is recognised to have value, then sustainability must be explicitly included as one of the objectives to be pursued by economic policy makers and planners. [Barbier, 1989:205]

A variety of techniques for accomplishing this objective have been devised, many of them discussed in books such as *Blueprint for a Green Planet* [Pearce *et al*,1989]. The limitations of this perspective have already been discussed [page 167]. Of more immediate concern is the observation that the free market ideology has been forced to incorporate environmental sustainability as a criterion, even though it acts as a constraint on the free market's paradigmatic interpretation of equity, diversity and productivity [Levidow *et al*,1996;Collins and Eamshaw,1992;Irwin and Vergracht,1989;Groenwegen and Vergragt,1991].

Liberal democracy

Dunleavy has distinguished between three essentially pluralist positions within the liberal democratic debate. Liberal anti-pluralism is very similar to the neo-classical, free market position outlined above, distinguished by the extent to which the market is seen as an adequate mechanism for allocation of resources, and the limited range of

transactions or social parameters which necessarily fall outside its scope. Nor is there a precise boundary between Dunleavy's other categories within the liberal democratic taxonomy. Conventional and neo-pluralist liberal democracy differ only in the extent to which citizen rights are represented through the democratic state as opposed to the need for specific interest groups. [Dunleavy, 1981:200].

Each of these latter categories can be traced to the idea of a social contract:

an agreement between individuals, or between individuals and a governing power, in which some personal liberties are freely surrendered in return for the advantages of having a well-organised society, or good government. [Flew, 1979:328]

An element of sophistication, leading to pluralism, is evident when

the political system also offered to all members of society extra chances to influence the state through any groups they cared to join or create for themselves. Moreover, when such groups competed for the ear of government, the competition was seen as essentially fair - in that a group's influence might depend not so much on its wealth and resources, but on the commitment of its members, their organisational ability and the strength of their arguments. [Bradshaw, 1986:75 see also McCarthy, 1983:212]

Clearly, then, the principle of *equity* is embedded in the various forms of liberal democracy, though it is intended to operate through political rather than economic mechanisms.

Productivity is recognised in the accountability of the state for the welfare of the citizens. The conventional democrat would probably argue that the vote offers adequate responsiveness to diverse wishes. Pluralism is an attempt to accommodate

diversity beyond the democratic principle of majority rule, which can also be interpreted as the denial of minorities. *Sustainability* of the social system is supposedly inherent in the adaptation of the state to the expressed concerns of the citizens who comprise it.

Environmental sustainability may then be seen as a constraint, as with Marxism and neo-classical theory, or as a consequence of pluralist pressure. The operation of the international polity can reasonably be classified as a liberal pluralist democracy³, and the Earth Summit held in Rio in 1995 demonstrated the place of environmentalism on the international agenda, as did indeed the earlier Brundtland report [Brundtland *et al*, 1987].

Thus it would appear that the four criteria - equity, productivity, sustainability and diversity -are largely shared among ideologies. Should this be taken to indicate that they are appropriate to the analysis of ideologies, or that they are too nebulous to have any practical significance?

If one considers the case of authoritarian ideologies, the criteria do not appear completely lacking in discrimination. An authoritarian elitist might claim that their ideology is *equitable* because there are genuine, intuitively assessed differences in the essential merit of different sectors of society. *Sustainability* of the system may be seen as appropriate to the natural order, and of the environment to continue the benefits to the elite; and restricting the benefits of *production* to a few creates fewer strains on the environment. However, although *diversity* may be one of those benefits for the privileged, it is a luxury not accorded to those whose role is defined in terms of

³ Of course, it is no closer to perfection than any other manifestation of democracy; but the principal international organisations tend to present themselves as committed to democratic ideals.

servitude, either to god or to the elite. Authoritarian elitism does not, therefore, meet the interactive criteria that have been set out in the co-operative rationale.

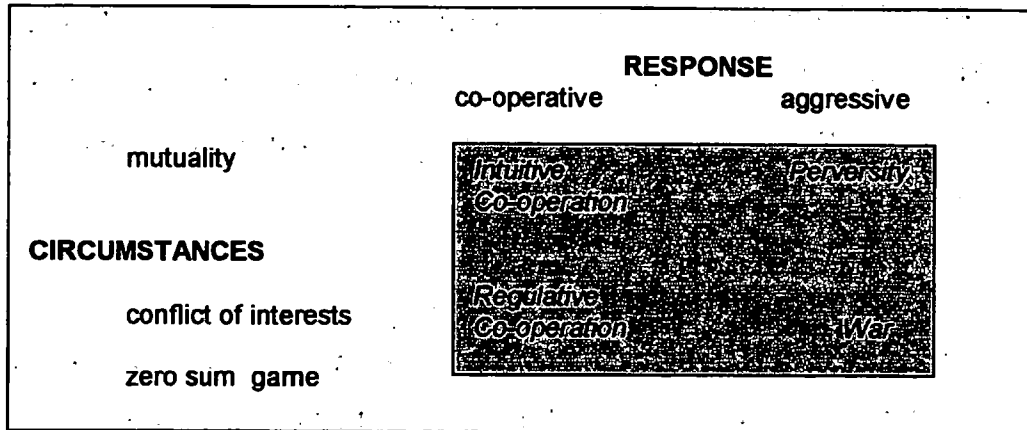
This seems to illustrate quite well that the criteria, despite the apparent convergence amongst the popular ideologies discussed above, are neither universal nor trivial.

Whether they are adequate is, of course, open to debate; but, where theory is habitually underdetermined, any pretence of universality should be a cause for suspicion. The ideological criteria - equity, sustainability, productivity, and diversity - would appear to be validated by reference to the methodological criteria; that is, in terms of theoretical consistency, and in the combination of intelligibility in the face of critical challenge with the evidence that they are shared concerns.

Circumstantial conflicts of interest

Common usage often contrasts competition and co-operation in ways that lead to bafflement and confusion. To compete, as it is understood here, is to have different objectives and interests, while to co-operate is to work together. It is therefore quite feasible to compete and co-operate simultaneously.

One way of approaching the issue is to distinguish between circumstance and response. The circumstances do not dictate which class of response is evoked. Circumstances may be seen as a continuum between complete mutuality of interests and a zero sum game in which my gain is automatically your loss. Responses to these circumstances vary between the co-operative and the aggressive; but it is important to note that competition can readily be seen in this scheme as a form of regulative co-operation in response to some degree of conflict of interests.



To elaborate a little on this: when co-operation is a response to an identity of interests, it may be called intuitive. A further point, which will be dealt with more fully a little later, is that our apprehension of shared interests may be achieved through negotiation, but can then become an unqualified gestalt. Any other than a co-operative response to such circumstances would seem to be perverse. This is not to suggest that the gestalt encompasses all purposes and all times. Within its boundary, however, there is a mutual conception of an identity of interests.

As interests diverge, it might be thought that co-operation must cease. Indeed, the contrasting of the terms may make it difficult to realise that co-operation can persist when the circumstances are conflictual, but, as has been suggested this is clearly not the case. The tendency, engendered by their linguistic opposition, to see competition and co-operation as mutually exclusive, fails to recognise that it is only in the zero sum game that mutuality entirely ceases. In all other cases, there is at least a shared interest in regulating the response to the conflicting interests. To repeat Sen's formulation, where there is less than perfect mutuality, each person knows that the choice between any such collusive arrangement and the breakdown position is a matter of co-operation since the former is better for both. [Sen, 1991:132]

Except in extreme circumstances, then, co-operation is a matter of agreed rules.

First order competition persists, but constrained within second order co-operation: that is, people will work together to negotiate rules within which different interests can be accommodated.

A further distinction and a clarification are required. The distinction is this: within this framework, co-operation is distinguished from co-ordination, by assigning to the former term voluntary acquiescence, while the latter is seen as the whole set of behaviours in which everyone follows a set of rules.

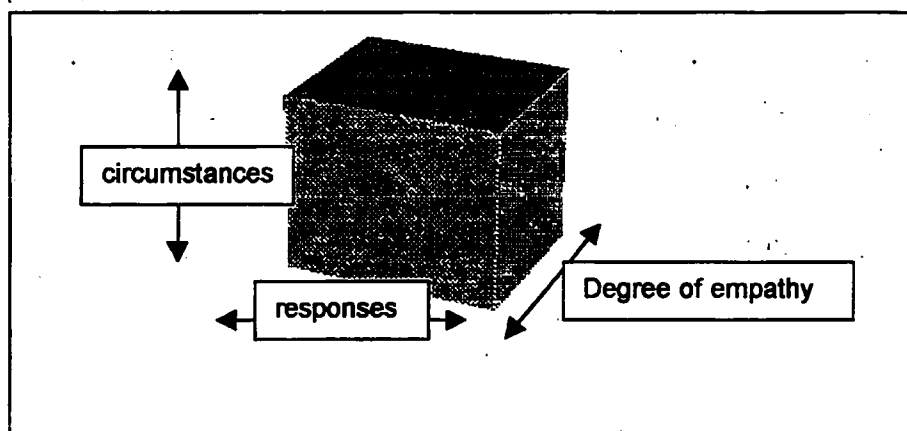
The clarification that is required relates to the three-level ordering. At the first level, circumstances may be practically competitive, but co-operation may be the appropriate second level response. At the second level, by implication, the setting of the rules will be competitive, since they will affect the first level outcomes. Once again, however, a co-operative response may be possible, in that there could be a shared interest in the rules governing the first level being equitably negotiated. All stakeholders' interests are recognised in setting the boundaries of conflictual behaviour. Obviously, since the first order conflict persists, this implies the need for third-order rules on how to set the second-order rules, and an infinite regression looms.

This is, however, quite consistent with the sceptical position. There is no ultimate reference point. On the other hand, the slide into nihilism is restrained by pragmatism in the philosophy espoused here, and pragmatism suggests that the regression be halted before confusion sets in. Hence, where *intuitive co-operation* is not a feasible response, a second-level of co-operation is identified as *regulative cooperation*; and

the process of setting the rules so that all people's interests are recognised may be described as *procedural co-operation*.

An idea which emerged from the field work is also quite helpful in this setting. Many respondents spoke of the idea of agreeing to agree. This, in my conception, is the last term of any regression: the n^{th} level. In between one may subdivide the continuum into any number of hierarchies that is convenient; and for the purposes of the paradigm I have chosen to use three levels.

It may be useful at this point to explore the ideas a little further. In particular, there seems to be some usefulness in identifying a third dimension to be added to the dimensions of circumstance and response. This would be the degree of empathy that obtains between actors. In this context it might best be considered a parameter; that is, a variable which may be taken as a constant for the cases immediately under consideration. To contextualise this thought further: at any given moment in any given cultural set, the degree of internalisation of others' needs may not be open to great variation, but is nevertheless potentially a variable.



Clearly the variables represented by these dimensions are interdependent, so that the cube may be thought to contain volumes of higher or lower probability: an interesting

idea, but not, unfortunately one that can be explored as part of the present endeavour.

Let the argument above be considered a claim of consistency: that the argument conforms to a widely accepted notion of rationality. In addition, I hope to show that it is supported by parallel constructs in others people's perspectives, since contextualising the intelligibility and resilience of the theory is the other requirement of its validation.

Some allies are easy to identify. For example, one of the analytic tools that Ostrom [1990] uses reflects the three orders of co-operation discussed in this paper. First order co-operation is described as operational; second order co-operation appears to equate to her collective choice rules, with third order co-operation matched with constitutional rules.

Support is also available from the political perspectives examined earlier for their relevance to the ideological criteria. Market theory assumes that intuitive co-operation is minimal, except in the domestic domain. Regulative co-operation is expressed in the constraints placed on transactions; essentially, that outright deception and the use of force are forbidden. Procedural co-operation is seen as superfluous, since objective analysis of the market mechanism defines the rules that are in everyone's best interests. The overlap with liberal democracy is again evident, however, in that those transactions which are recognised as being beyond the market's scope are similarly to be managed by some form of procedural co-operation.

Liberal democracy is in itself an attempt to identify processes that reify the legitimation implicit to the social contract; a set of guidelines for procedural co-

operation. Marxism is in many respects a critique of those failures. Gramsci and Albert and Hahnel have already been used to illustrate how the authoritarian and determinist strains in traditional Marxism have largely given way to a recognition that the definition of appropriate rules is to be negotiated rather than imposed. This belief is somewhat complicated by the idea of false consciousness:

...submerged in reality, the oppressed cannot perceive clearly the 'order' which serves the interests of the oppressors whose image they have internalised. [Freire, 1972:38]

Procedural co-operation may then be subject to a critique by an elite, which has been challenged in the earlier discussion of the critical movement.

Foucault might be more associated with the present model. To repeat:

While Habermas acknowledges a bifurcation of reason, that since it only occurred once can be rectified, Foucault assumes that reason is in a constant process of bifurcation in some way or another. [Valero-Silva, 1995:188]

Thus, while the structuring of our relations is central to Foucaultian thought, there is no assumption that a single rationality can expose a point of equivalence of power.

To relate these positions to the construct developed here, procedural co-operation might be seen in both the Habermasian and Foucaultian constructions. For the sake of contrast, let us take Habermas as represented in the positivist critical perspective. In such a case, there would be an elite operating at a fourth level, at which the rules for identifying procedural co-operation were interpreted, but a fifth level, criticising their analysis, would be unnecessary. Foucault's concern could then be reasonably portrayed as being at this fourth level, given his interest in the techniques of analysing procedural co-operation. However, unlike critical positivism, this analysis would

include an acknowledgement of the infinite regression. Derrida might be seen as circling to and fro along the further reaches of the regression, without ever quite linking these to the levels described here as regulative and procedural co-operation.

In answer to a question put to him, some years ago, whether, "the theoretical radicality of deconstruction can be translated into a radical political praxis," he admitted that he had never succeeded in relating its method to "existing political codes and programmes." [Sham Lal, 1995]

By contrast, the crude authoritarianism which was briefly discussed in the previous section never gets beyond the second level.

More difficult, in some ways, than contextualising the stratification of co-operation is its contextualisation with other notions of co-operation. This is in part because they tend to rely on contrasts between co-operation and competition that are incompatible with those which emerge from this set of constructions. You may recall that *competition* is understood here to refer to attempts to resolve circumstantial conflicts of interests through second order, and preferably third order co-operative responses.

Definitional nuances such as these often seem to cause problems, perhaps because much of the work on the conceptualisation of co-operation emerges from sociology rather than from philosophy. Some respond to the difficulties by becoming virtually atheoretical; Paton, for example, asserts that co-operation is what co-operatives do [Paton, 1978]. This must surely be seen as a questionable reduction, but other constructions have a broader application.

Keller has drawn attention to the gendering of competition as a masculine recognition of hard realities, while women grow sentimental over harmony and co-operation [Keller, 1992:52]; but although this may be a useful insight into the connotations of

usage, gender analysis is only one aspect of the macro-political economic analysis on which the focus rests here [Richards, 1982:25]. Keller also refers to Kropotkin, whose evolutionary approach inverted that of Darwin by rooting adaptive success in mutual aid [Kropotkin, 1902]; and to Ghiselin who claimed that

No hint of genuine charity ameliorates our vision of society, once sentimentalism has been laid aside. What passes for co-operation turns out to be a mixture of opportunism and exploitation...[Ghiselin, *cited in* Keller, 1992:48]

Perhaps each of these contrary views could be interpreted in terms of regulative and procedural co-operation, whereby a win/lose confrontation can be converted to a win/win game either immediately or in the longer term, or at least minimise the losses by reducing wasteful aggression. If Ghiselin chooses to view such processes as opportunism and exploitation, that is surely his loss.

Regretably not all analyses can be accommodated by the paradigm that has been constructed here. Craig, for example, attempts to deal with many of the same issues [Craig, 1993:\$2], but does not do so in a way that I find intelligible. We would agree that conflict does not always oppose co-operation. However, he then goes on to quote Coser approvingly:

Social conflict may be defined as a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to *neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals*. [Coser, 1968:232 *my emphasis*]

Define terms as you will; but to assert this and then to claim that co-operation can coexist with conflict seems utterly inconsistent to me. How do you co-operate with someone who is trying to injure and eliminate you in pursuit of their particular interest? Craig also characterises the commitment to achievement of a goal combined with

disagreement over ends and means as one of simultaneous high conflict and high co-operation. Is it not simpler and more constructive to make use of the categorical distinction between circumstance and response?

Again, Craig defines competition as a sub-type of conflict; well and good: but he then goes on to claim that competition implies a win-lose situation. His example is that of sports teams, which are seen to co-operate amongst themselves, but compete with each other. This is not inconsistent; but a richer analysis might emerge from the recognition of sports as a simple example of regulative co-operation, which allows partially inconsistent interests to be managed for mutual benefit. (Procedural co-operation is implied if the involvement in the games is taken to include a voluntary acceptance of the rules.) In competitive sports, although you may not get everything you want, you will either gain enough from the process to feel that overall you are benefitting by continuing, or you, and others, can benefit by the assortive process of discovering what you are good at.

While Craig's analysis leaves me dissatisfied, Etzioni's model of communitarianism is more entertaining, in that it shares many features with the rationale offered here, while diverging in one very important respect. The similarity is most apparent in terms of a tri-partite analysis and the doubts expressed about the rationality of the free market. However, when the relationship between coercion and co-operation is considered, some doubts arise about the implications of Etzioni's deontological moral commitments.

To take the areas of correspondence first; Etzioni's *I, We, & They* formulation bears a clear relation to the rationalities of the market, of co-operation, and of coercion [Etzioni, 1968:27]. The co-operative paradigm is reflected in Etzioni's view of the

market as ultimately self-destructive; of competition as constrained conflict; of the importance of trust; of the role of participation in social construction; and of the potential social benefits of competition [Etzioni,1988:250,182,138,7,203].

It is when the role of an elite comes into focus that a significant element of dissonance may become evident. Amongst the straws in the wind are the perceived need for a controlling overlayer without which, it is asserted, "a societal groupingwill be unable to assume an active stance" [Etzioni,1968:74,107]; the implication that a certain form of socialisation is a pre-condition of participation - "society requires a balance, and builds on properly socialised individuals" [Etzioni, 1988:11]; and most particularly in the devotion to the deontological position that "actions are *morally right when they conform to a relevant principle or duty.*" [Etzioni,1988:12, *emphasis in the original*]

Clearly there is a difference in the moral ground between the arguments of Etzioni and myself; but in what substantive way is this different from the notion of a co-operative self-management qualified by a recognition that coercion may at times be inescapable? If there is a difference, it would seem to lie at the implicit fourth level of co-operation, the role of which is to assess the third level [procedural co-operation.] In the co-operative paradigm, the *n*th level is conceived as being as open to access as is possible. In Etzioni's model the *n*th level appears to be a self-perpetuating assimilative process, from which permission to participate at the level of procedure is determined. Deontology positions morality as an exogenous phenomenon, and therefore potentially attributable to an authority beyond the opinions of equal members of society. Whether that authority acts through deontologists or through social scientists, it may be seen to over-ride the communitarian commitment to participation. Granted, Etzioni argues that we have a responsibility to explore

the *sources* of these goals: to what extent are they formed freely by members of a community or imposed by powerful actors, whether it is the government, a foreign power, a corporation, or a labor union? [Etzioni, 1988:136 *emphasis in original*.]

However, Etzioni also seems to assign ultimate judgement on the propriety of procedure to some selectively accessible authority.

We cannot escape judging goals, not in simple terms of according them merit and demerit points based on *our personal* preferences or values, but in terms of an ethic whose criteria can be justified.... [Etzioni, 1988:136 *emphasis in original*; the mode of justification is not made explicit]

Is this sufficient to validate the suspicion that Etzioni's model is primarily exclusive; that membership of the community is not innate, but approved in relation to definitive standards that are the special province of a moral or intellectual elite? On the other hand, can it be denied that, although the co-operative presumption is of inclusion in the community, children will be expected to learn a measure of social responsibility before they become full members?

If there is a difference, then, it would seem to be derived from the difference in moral commitments; and it is here that Etzioni's arguments may be thought to lack rigour. His representation of deontology is highly dependent on the rejection of utilitarianism; but in the course of this project he is highly selective about the form of consequentialism he reports, and does little more than repeat the traditional objections.

He claims that no significance is attached to intentionality [Etzioni,1988:12]; and while it may be possible to find utilitarians who adopt this position, consequentialism has already been shown to deal with the issue. He repeats a form of Ross's misrepresentation [*ibid*:13], by assuming that consequentialists give no moral weighting to transgressions such as deceptions. Similarly, he appears to believe that, to a consequentialist, all means are justified by the ends they serve [*ibid*:24]; which could only be the case in the unimaginable circumstance in which a means had no intrinsic moral consequences.

His major objection, however, seems to be that consequentialism encourages us to treat others as means to our own ends [Etzioni,1988:12,244]. Given that probably the most familiar aspect of utilitarianism is that we should seek the greatest good of the greatest number, this denial of the interpersonal element of consequentialism is curious to say the least. Possibly he is too ready to conflate consequentialism with the most reductive forms of market rationalism to add emotive appeal to his deontology. What makes this conflation yet stranger is that Etzioni is clearly aware of the ideas of "interdependent utility":

All we have to suppose is that the perception of one party, A, of the welfare of the other, B, is a variable in A's utility function such that when A perceives that B is better off, A's utility value rises. [Boulding, 1981:6 A preface to Grant's *Economics: The Economy of Love and Fear* cited in Etzioni,1988:26]

Surely in this light, Etzioni is not justified in arguing that

Ethically, the I-utility concept remains true to the hedonistic version of utilitarianism; altruistic acts are explained by the actor's pleasure;

authentic, altruistic acts, acts of self-denial or sacrifice are incompatible with this concept. [ibid:26]

What Boulding is describing is the win/win possibility that arises from empathy, and which encompasses acts of the highest altruism. Wherein lies the benefit of insisting that an act that can arise from love should only be performed out of a sense of duty?

The only conclusion that I find in any way convincing is that Etzioni is struggling to maintain a necessary distinction between the fulfilment of duty (*affirmation*) and pleasure (*satisfaction -hedonism*) in order to validate deontology, and hence authority. There is no need to detail his assertions, since they simply iterate the notion that the two value sets are not reducible to a common factor [Etzioni, 1988:12,21,22,23,26]. However, he then proceeds to cut away the foundations of his argument, by asserting that

..... we shall see that people seek a *balance* between their moral commitments and their pleasures (a judicious mix) rather than seeking to 'maximise' either. [Etzioni, 1988:67]

Surely a balance between incomparable entities is unintelligible. *Ipso facto*, if you claim a balance on empirical evidence, you concede commensurability; and why this should not be described as utility is in no way made apparent. Furthermore, Etzioni's recommendation of the internalisation of norms [1988:45], would also seem to suggest that the distinction between affirmation and satisfaction is contingent, not absolute.

Scepticism is further encouraged by the strangeness of the methodological argument [Etzioni, 1988:21-31]. One element in his opposition to the commensurability of values is that

Once a concept is defined so that it encompasses *all* the incidents that are members of a given category..... it ceases to enhance one's ability to explain. [*ibid*:27]

I find this is an extraordinary comment. Firstly, the members of a given category are necessarily encompassed by the definition. That is what makes them members of it. Secondly, a category identifies at least one common characteristic of its members; and does not the distinction between all the members of the set *squares* and all the members of the set *circles* enhance our ability to explain shapes? Similarly, does not the distinction between all members of the set *utility* and all members of the set *disutility* enhance our ability to explain behaviour? [cf: Adams-Webber,1979:5-11]

To say that we achieve greater explanatory power by creating further distinctions, as he does, seems neither controversial nor relevant. Not all members of the set *squares* are blue squares, but this cannot be taken to infer that blue squares and red squares are not both squares. Affirmation may be distinguishable from satisfaction - as Sen argues, intellectually motivated compassion can be distinguished from empathic compassion [Sen,1977:326]; but if we are able to balance them, we clearly experience them as sharing at least one characteristic.

The methodological assault on consequentialism is, therefore, of very doubtful value. Etzioni's deontology seems simply to emphasise a particular aspect of consequentialism, and to seek, unconvincingly, to make the part the whole. Why should he do this? I have no other explanation than this: while interpersonal consequentialism is endogenous, deontology may be based on an exogenous morality, which allows for an elite which allows or denies membership of the community according to understandings which are not universally accessible. Only in implementation, perhaps, would it be possible to detect whether my doubts simply

represent esoteric pedantry, or an area in which practical accommodation might be hard to achieve.

Either way, in the context of validation, such theoretical dissonance is not prohibitive. Empirical evidence, as has been argued, is difficult to produce in these circumstances, because of complexity and counterfactuality, and because the rationale of co-operation proposed here has not been used as a conceptual intervention. All that can be achieved is to show that the paradigm intersects with other models which have been accorded a fair degree of status by the academic community.

Consistency may thus be claimed for the relationship between competition and co-operation, and critical challenge has tested the limits of assurance of the construction.

Tripartite divisions: co-operation, coercion and the market

Dichotomies have a poor reputation in some quarters; justifiably so, if they are abused. The simplistic allocation of gender attributes has demonstrated this amply [Keller, 1992]. Nevertheless, if we are to differentiate at all, we cannot escape the creation of boundaries between that category to which we attribute a characteristic, and all those phenomena which do not share that characteristic.

The boundaries may have qualities of their own, such as flexibility, porousness, and depth. From depth of boundaries can be inferred the continuum and the included middle [McNeil and Jaros, 1986]. By cross-referencing categories we create various other forms of set, by cross-referencing series we create grids, and by cross-referencing continua, we create spaces, which can be multiplied by other dimensions.

It is in such a semantic context that the three types of dynamic used in this analysis - co-operation, coercion and the market - have been selected. Because of the grounding of this paradigm in an ontology of transformation and transaction, the manner in which transactions (or exchanges, or processes of entitlement) are undertaken is necessarily crucial to the development of the ideological paradigm. One distinction between modes of transaction lies between those to which all parties agree, and those in which some transaction is imposed.

There is no supposition that the boundary between voluntary and involuntary behaviour is absolute, or that we have a reliable means of telling one from another. Theory tells us that our differentiations are simply a convenience. Nevertheless, we can distinguish between the idea of seeking to act according to our own conception of our preferences, and being pressured to conform to someone else's. The distinction is intelligible in most language games, it would seem, even if a deontological culture might put different moral loadings on the components to those suggested, for example, by those who favour autonomy.

However, because of an awareness that abstract simplicity can easily become simplistic, an inductive critique seems appropriate. From this one may deduce alternatives to the ontological context which juxtaposes co-operation and coercion. In particular, in the co-operation/coercion dichotomy there is an implicit assumption that in attempting to respond to transformation and transaction we have only forms of persuasion ranging from the empathic to the coercive. This ignores exogenous mechanisms; ways of arranging matters which are due to some natural or supernatural order. Supernatural authority does not fall within the set of commitments adopted here; and without wishing to offend those who sincerely believe themselves

acquainted with the will of such a source, familiarity with the word of god is seen as an illusion which is reducible to a predominantly coercive practice.

From another point of view, there are attractions in the idea of inherent relationships between phenomena, of which we can take advantage. All technology, it might be claimed, is based on such processes. Amongst exogenous social mechanisms, that which seems to have been most evidently reified in social practice as a mode of transaction, is the market.

On what grounds might one make the claim that it is distinct, rather than a "transient and expedient amalgam" [Streeck and Schmitter, 1985:2] of the other two dynamics? I would argue the case on two grounds. Firstly, that analysts seem to have found it to be persistently and consistently useful in the interpretation of social forms; and, secondly, and to me more importantly, the market may be differentiated as a mode of transaction. Whereas, in their purest forms, co-operative transactions are characterised by an unconditional mutuality, and coercive transactions by the imposed distribution of interpersonal irresponsibility, market transactions are characterised by calculative reciprocity. (Another form in which this could be expressed might be to describe the modes of transaction as, respectively, *moral*, *immoral*, and *amoral*.)

There are secondary characteristics of market transactions which contribute to their differentiation. Part of the logic of calculative reciprocity involves the synergy of the division of labour. Specialisation and exchange suggests a need to invent a medium of exchange, a store of wealth, and a unit of comparison - to wit, money. These characteristics are, however, readily imaginable as aspects of co-operative or coercive societies, even if they would appear with a different complexion. Indeed, the

distinction made between market institutions and market ideology has already emphasised this point.

Nevertheless, it would seem that the ideology based on calculative reciprocity may be viewed as a distinct variable, ultimately irreducible to coercion (imposed distribution) or co-operation (unconditional mutuality), or to a combination of the two. In summary: the ontology of transformation and transaction leads to an analysis in terms of the clearly distinguishable dynamics of co-operation, coercion, and the market.

Is this argument enough to meet the criterion of theoretical consistency? Lessons have been learned from some perceived failures of other approaches. Particularly useful has been a confrontation with Streeck and Schmitter's argument for a quadripartite analysis. A little later the suggestion will be made that, as valuable as their ideas may be in many respects, they are not well supported methodologically; but the wish to support this perspective has forced me to examine the basis of my model with greater rigour. There can be considerable benefits in banging ideas up against each other until they squeal.

Other contrasts have been less constructive, even if they have been useful in drawing attention to potential failures of consistency. Unsurprisingly transcendence makes an appearance. Jefferis walks into this one, being able to recognise the individualism from which neo-classical economics is derived as a partial view, but remaining convinced that the mode of production is the true basis for distinguishing one society from another [Jefferis, 1988:17]. Others "cannot penetrate appearances to the reality of exploitation" [*ibid*:18], but implicitly Jefferis can.

Consistency, in these circumstances, is, however, difficult to assess as a criterion. Is a theoretically incoherent or inconsistent paradigm necessarily less likely to meet the

superordinate criterion of utility than one which is consistent? Given that assessments of utility are likely to be plagued by complexity and counterfactuality, one's answer seems likely to depend on one's faith in the value of academic validation; but, willy-nilly, that is the game we are playing.

Be that as it may, and for what it is worth, a contextualisation of the tri-partite analysis of the co-operative paradigm is the next stage of the process; and, thankfully, I acknowledge that Uphoff [1993:610 *et seq*] has already done much of the work by juxtaposing a set of comparable models.

He refers, for example, to Hunter's model for the modernisation of peasant societies [Hunter, 1969], in which the first sector is described as bureaucracy, involving forced compliance; the second sector refers to market mechanisms in which "decisions are left to individuals to calculate without reference to broader interests or the public good" [Uphoff, 1993:610]; and the third sector which operates through voluntaristic mechanisms such as bargaining, accommodation and discussions. Despite minor differences in boundary selection, this is clearly a replica of the model used here, even to the assumption that

These different methods of seeking and gaining compliance can be, and indeed should be, combined to compose an overall strategy of rural development. [*ibid*:610]

Others have shared this conception, in a variety of fields. Uphoff reports a variety of consistent typologies: Etzioni's coercive, remunerative, and normative categories; French and Raven's coercive power, reward power, and referent power; and Boulding's threat systems, exchange systems, and integrative systems. Galbraith's taxonomy matches slightly less well, although conditioning is coercive, and the

compensatory and condign dynamics seem to describe the tension between empathic voluntarism and individualistic market rationality, even if they do so from a slightly different perspective. Interestingly, moving into the realms of behavioural science, there seem to be approximate isomorphs of the tripartite model used here. Hirschman, cited in Uphoff, talks of *exit*, which is a threat of leaving, *voice*, representing exchange, and *loyalty*, representing a recognition of interdependent utility.

| | | |
|----------|----------|--------------|
| EXIT | VOICE | LOYALTY |
| COERCION | EXCHANGE | CO-OPERATION |

There are other sources of support. Michelson [1994:17] has drawn attention to the Dalberg-Larsen distinctions between public-, market- and self-regulation as legal forms. Hodgson [1984] argues for an impurity principle, in which a functional democracy is understood to be constituted by a viable equilibrium achieved between planning, markets, and participation.

A note of caution might not go amiss, despite the apparent consensus. We could all be chasing each other round in circles, and there would be no unequivocal evidence to demonstrate the futility of our conservatism.

Of course, just as Galbraith's analysis seems to cover the same territory without exactly reproducing the same map, there are others who have offered variants on what seems to be essentially the same intuition of social organisation. Burrell and Morgan's map of social theory offers, on one axis, consensus/regulation to conflict/radical change, and, on the other, subjective or objective epistemologies. [Burrell and Morgan, 1979]

| | subjective | objective |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------|
| consensus / regulation | | |
| conflict / radical change | | |

To me this appears to use familiar elements, but to arrange them in ways that calls into question any degree of shared semantic reference. For example, by combining [inter-] subjectivity and consensuality, one might achieve something like voluntarism; but why should regulation be confined to this end of the continuum, when regulation can so evidently also be a product or cause of conflict, or, indeed, of an objective epistemology, which appears on the other axis; and why should radical change be opposed to consensuality, out of which it can arise? Comparing this model with the Uphoff analysis calls for a new descriptive term, and it will be labelled *Escherian isomorphism*, which may be defined as the sensation one has when familiar entities assume unfamiliar relationships and behaviours.

Streeck and Schmitter, on the other hand, appear, at first blush, to share the Uphoff/Hunter model, even though they suggest that there is a missing element. They quite reasonably draw attention to the difficulties of devising theories of social order, and to the tendency

- 1] to reduce actors to ideal types;
- 2] to assume that interaction will lead to equilibrium;
- 3] to assume that behaviour is mutually adjusted and predictable;

4] and to believe that the particular metaphor is empirically correct and normatively proper [Streeck and Schmitter, 1985:1].

Somewhat confusingly, although these characteristics appear to be postulated as dangers, they subsequently seem to become the criteria for Streeck and Schmitter's own addition to the taxonomy of *community*, *market* and *state*, which is *association*.

Quite explicitly they use the conceptual framework within which these models are said to have been constructed as the mould for their own: [1] ideal type actors are devised [*ibid*:11], [2]equilibrium is foreseen [*ibid*:22], [3] associations are promoted as progenitors of social adjustment and normatively acceptable results [*ibid*:28]; [4] and the empirical ground is very firmly asserted [*ibid*:3].

Reverting to my preferred criteria, there would appear, therefore, to be claims both of utility and of validity. Claims of empirical verification are combined with a somewhat confused suggestion that, although the traditional methodology is of dubious value, it can be used to validate their own alternative.

Their methodological position is made no clearer by such contrasting statements as these:

...economists - as far as we know, without exception - have treated associations as cartels, and associative action as a major cause of inefficient, suboptimal resource allocation. [*ibid*:4]

and, as an inspiration for their construction of associations;

....when John Maynard Keynes reflected on the consequences of 'The End of Laissez-Faire' and searched for a new order, 'somewhere between the individual and the modern state', he naturally looked backward

....'towards medieval conceptions of separate autonomies'. Let us follow Lord Keynes' suggestion.... [*ibid*:10]

The validation of their theory seems, thus, to me, to be confused. I would not challenge the potential usefulness of the idea of associations; and legitimacy is to some extent implicit in the interest that is said to be shown by social scientists in the idea [*ibid*:14] - though to my mind less than would be indicated by public interest in the idea. In terms of methodological validation, however, I feel that their arguments are inadequate.

Firstly, the problems which become criteria, as enumerated above, are contingent. An ideal type taxonomy of social order does not necessarily have these failings; and, secondly, if these failings are to be avoided, a clearer distinction needs to be made between the idea of a dynamic, an ideal type, and a practical example. An *ideal* is taken in this context to refer to an archetype. A *social dynamio* is a relationship which leads to a distinctive behavioural pattern. A social dynamic may thus be illustrated by an *ideal type*, which represents such a pattern. There is also the possibility of describing an empirical and approximate manifestation, which might be described as a *practical example*, and may even be the source from which the dynamic is abstracted. While this terminology may not be in widespread use, the underlying principles conform to Weber's ideal-type construction process, and to his injunction not to confuse the ideal and the empirical [Burger,1976].

Certain implications may help to clarify the perception of inadequacy in Streeck and Schmitter's claim. Firstly, the movement from induction to abstraction must authentically sever the dynamic from its roots, before the ideal type is reconstructed without reference to its origins. (This method should be familiar to those who have

studied Checkland's SSM [Naughton,1984:39]). Secondly, a set of dynamics, if it is to serve a practical analytic function, needs to consist in constructs which are clearly distinguishable, yet accessible to combination in such a way as to inform the analysis of all phenomena which lie within their field.

Streeck and Schmitter do not appear to have met these criteria in their representations of the traditional dynamics. The process they have undertaken seems to have been to take *practical examples* of distinguishable organisational types - community, state, and market - and then added a fourth: association. Membership of *community*, for example, is said to be ascriptive, which would seem to be more consistent with *the state's* guiding principle of hierarchical control than the spontaneous solidarity attributed to community [Streeck and Schmitter, 1985:5]. Abstraction, as they have approached it, has failed to produce clear distinctions.

More conclusively, I would suggest, their eager failure to explain associations in terms of state, market and community is not indicative of the inadequacy of the underlying idea, but of their interpretation of it. Simply consider their definition of the principle on which associations are said to operate:

The central principle is that of concertation or negotiation within and among a limited and fixed set of interest organisations that mutually recognise each other's status and entitlements and are capable of reaching and implementing relatively stable compromises [*pacts*] in the pursuit of their interests. [*ibid*:10]

This is surely a description of co-operation between organisations; though later this view is qualified by the introduction of market forces, in that the transactions between them are seen to be based on calculative reciprocity [*ibid*:13], rather than the unconditional mutuality which might be inferred from the original description. There is

also the interpolation of a coercive element in the relations between the organisation and its members [*ibid*:11], again qualified by the non-ascriptive nature of that membership, which makes it to some extent voluntary and co-operative. The relationship between the set of organisations and the wider society is again based on calculative reciprocity [*ibid*:16]. All in all, then, it seems quite simple to see the associations that they describe as a manifestation of all three of the transactional dynamics; but predominantly of those which are described in this thesis as coercive and market.

A distinctive element might be discerned in the idea of a 'limited and fixed set' [see *quotation above*]. This proves, however, to be an illusory distinction. The emergent associations are not such neatly packaged phenomena after all, being "disparate, uneven, and pragmatic responses to particular dysfunctions and conflicts" [*ibid*:8]; and furthermore, are said to be distinguishable from "harder', more formalised types of organisations.....whose boundaries are easier to define." [*ibid*:18]

Even this slight but potential reason for accepting that a fourth dynamic has been discovered is thus contradicted within their own text, and their crucial claim seems unsubstantiated. Observation may justifiably have led them to discern

the emergence in Western societies of systems of bargained interest, accommodation, and policy concertation....[*ibid*:3]

but their understanding of the three dynamics has deceived them into a highly questionable assertion that

the logic according to which these systems operate cannot be reduced to the respective logics of community, market and state, or explained by *ad hoc* mixes of these. [Streeck and Schmitter, 1985:3]

If the principles which are abstracted from their models - spontaneous solidarity, dispersed competition, and hierarchical control - fail to explain associations, that may well be due to the inadequacies of Streeck and Schmitter's process of abstraction and theorisation, not because of an inherent problem with the underlying argument.

This is not, however, to suggest that their work has no value. In terms of utility, the idea of association may be welcomed as the identification of a prevalent manifestation of the interaction of the dynamics. Furthermore, they may well be justified in arguing that some form of 'regulated self-regulation' [*ibid*:22] would contribute to the resolution of the conflicts and complementarities of community, market and state which they express so clearly and concisely.

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| community and market [-] | community obstructs freedom | market undermines normative values |
| community and market [+] | community encourages good faith | market extends the range of possible transactions |
| state and market [-] | state distorts markets | markets undermine the state's authority |
| state and market [+] | state provides a legal framework | market is a supplementary mechanism |
| community and state [-] | community frustrates centralism | state breaks down communities |
| community and state [+] | community offers spontaneous solidarity | state contributes to a loss of identity |

adapted from Streeck and Schmitter, 1985:2

Their contribution may perhaps most happily be used as an elaboration of a technical aspect of subsidiarity rather than as an analytic tool with a wider range of applications.

Pursuing this methodological theme, another challenge to the model constructed here could be based on its differentiation from Weber's famous categorisation of the bases

of authority in society: the traditional, the charismatic and the bureaucratic. These, too, can be accounted for by reference to the dynamics that are favoured here; both the traditional and the bureaucratic are essentially coercive, while the charismatic is essentially co-operative, unless one assumes that the followers are dupes.⁴

There seems then to be an intersection between the two sets of analytic tools. Could one therefore infer a claim that, using an approximation of Weber's methodology, a superior analytic tool has been constructed? That is not my intention, except in so far as times change. Weber was operating within a different ontology, in which authority was widely assumed to be necessary to social order. As self-definition has become more widely valued, Rothschild-Witt has found it appropriate to add to the Weberian model an observed *value rational* category. This approximates to a more participative co-operation in which organisation is dependent on a reasonable degree of conformity to a consensual set of substantive ethics [Rothschild-Witt, 1979]. In proposing such an addition, Rothschild-Witt extends the range of Weber's model, though not so far, I would suggest as that which has been constructed here.

One further point emerges from these observations, concerning the iteration between theory and observation. Rothschild-Witt is expressly committed to a grounded approach, and while recognising the dangers of rationalism, I have grave doubts about the potential for social innovation where analysis is restricted to the mindsets of conventional opinion.

⁴Aian Thomas has questioned this third relationship [*private communication*, June, 1996]. However:

The Charismatic leader gains and maintains authority solely by proving his strength in lifeAbove all, however, his divine mission must 'prove' itself in that those who faithfully surrender to him must fare well.... (and) His charismatic claim breaks down if his mission is not recognised by those to whom he feels he has been sent. [Weber, 1970:249/247]

If our sets are to contribute to our understanding, empirical *ad hoc* distinctions are unlikely to be particularly helpful. Empiricism is inadequate because while we can explain the inductively constructed categories in terms of the dynamics, we cannot perform the reciprocal task. Identification of the dynamics may arise through analysis and abstraction from manifest social structures, but we cannot explain the relations and make informed choices between categories without theorising them. In addition, out of the dynamic elements we can construct many other options, recognise variants of, and, indeed, the similarities of observed social structures, rather than seek to make innovations conform to the patterns and conventions of the past.

Thus , following Buckley, we may prefer,

instead of asking how structure affects, determines, channels action and interactions, [to] ask how structure is created, maintained and recreated.

[Buckley, 1981:188]

For these reasons the methodological critique from those who wish to emphasise induction is not accepted. As Etzioni says, "Social scientists are much too quick to be satisfied with correlations" [Etzioni,1988:17]. The iteration between theory and experience is perceived as being an essential, and indeed, inescapable aspect of social analysis.

Innumerable other theories could be taken into account in this contextualisation. All that can be demonstrated, however, is that the model used here has allies, and that there are grounds for retaining the perspective in the face of implicit and explicit challenges from a variety of sources.

Coercion and the market

Perhaps the greatest problem in validating the arguments concerning market, coercive and co-operative dynamics lies in the complexity, counterfactuality and underdetermination of the evidence. The dynamics, according to the understanding expressed here, have not been seen in their purest forms. Thus, even if the relationships between variables could be disentangled, the interpretation of the evidence will always depend on assumptions of what might have happened given other initial positions or contexts, and will be open to conflicting theoretical inferences [Przeworski, 1991:103].

Nevertheless, it is possible to assert that some arguments are intelligible within a given discourse and are supported by selected evidence, while others require a certain suspension of disbelief. Assessing the dynamics under discussion - co-operation, coercion and the market - in terms of the chosen criteria - equity, diversity, sustainability and productivity - is thus an attempt to present a plausible explanation of how they might contribute to the construction of viable and satisfying social institutions.

Two further points: firstly, the evidence that follows is all at the level of the state. I felt that the dynamics are less easy to contrast in interpersonal examples, and that in the case of organisations function often determines the pattern of behaviour, confusing any contrasts that might be displayed. Whether or not the conclusions that are drawn are transferable to scales of interaction other than the state is a matter of judgement.

Secondly, inequality is not *per se* inequitable. Differentiation of reward has been accepted as potentially acceptable within a co-operative perspective. All that can be

demonstrated is that both coercive and market oriented societies appear to intensify differentials of reward, and the onus might be thought to be on their proponents to explain the justice of these outcomes.

Coercion

From the point of view of conventional rationality, the failures of coercion and free market ideologies are not hard to argue.

Coercion, by definition, assigns little significance to equity or diversity. The central idea of the use of force is to make others conform to a conception other than their own, so that even if the distribution of goods and services is equitable, political equity is a necessary casualty; and diversity is similarly disregarded as an authoritative criterion. Productivity, on a narrow definition, can be high, though if the whole range of satisfactions are taken into account, psychological and social needs can be perceived as being unlikely to be fulfilled, unless it is believed that dependency is the most valued of human circumstances. Simultaneously, restrictions on feedback and structural disincentives seem to constrain the potential of highly centralised systems, at least in comparison to other economic paradims. The experience of centrally planned economies tends to support this view, and will be discussed in due course. Observation further suggests that the sustainability of the environment is challenged under the incentive and information systems that obtain in rigidly hierarchical societies. The sustainability of political systems of this kind also appears problematic, though explanations for this phenomenon often depend on assumptions about the resilience of independent attitudes.

Some flesh can readily be put on these bare bones. Coercion as a state system is perhaps at its most intense in the totalitarian state. This was identified as having an official ideology to which everyone is supposed to adhere, focussed on a 'perfect final state of mankind'; a single mass party usually led by one man, organised hierarchically and either superior to or intertwined with the state bureaucracy; a technically conditioned near complete monopoly of control by the party and the bureaucracy subordinate to it, of the effective use of all weapons of armed combat; a near complete monopoly similarly exercised over all means of effective mass communication; and a system of physical or psychological terroristic police control; and central control and direction of the entire economy. [Schapiro *after* Friedrich, 1972:18]

No example of this would be perfect, but the Soviet Union and its satellites seem to fit the bill, and may thereby be used to illustrate some of the typical consequences of the coercive state.

On environmental sustainability it has been suggested that

The major environmental problems of the central and eastern Europe are rooted in the socio-economic structure of the past 45 years. The structure's major characteristics have included state ownership, centralised planning, unrealistic pricing, obsolete and inefficient industries, non-enforcement of environmental laws, and indifference to environmental concerns by state authorities. In addition, public participation was prevented and state environmental data often kept secret. [IIASA, 1992:19]

The *Nations of the Earth Report* [UN,1992,vol3:459] prepared by the former republics of the USSR endorses this view, while another aspect of coercion is implicit in the report of the Russian Federation.

For decades, the economic development of Russia was characterised by rigid economic isolation from the world economy and over-militarisation of its economy as a result of East-West confrontation and the arms race. Under these conditions, main economic tasks were accomplished 'at any price', including impact on the environment and unsustainable use of resources. [*ibid*:393]

The political sustainability of coercive totalitarian states can also be thought questionable, though many regimes have proven remarkably resilient. Schapiro puts a lot of weight on the leadership role [Schapiro, 1972:124], which might be taken to indicate that sooner or later a dearth of ruthless but effectively populist successors will lead to collapse and transformation. If the Incas are considered as totalitarian it could be argued that the concentration of the leadership may allow external or internal challenges to capture authority the more easily [Schaeffer,1970]; and Nazi Germany's Third Reich demonstrated the dangers of the universalising tendency of totalitarianism. However, the most potent threats in the long run may be the failures of productivity and equity that seem to hamper even the most idealistically founded of coercive regimes, combined with the seemingly irrepressible instinct of the human being for autonomy and a licence for diversity.

Diversity is not, of course, one of the virtues likely to be recognised in a coercive regime, at least of the type described by Friedrich. In such circumstances, the exercise of an instinct to diverge is likely to be perceived as deviance; and in view of

the later collapse of the authority of the communist parties, Shapiro's comments on deviance in eastern Europe, written in 1978, are instructive:

In no state has deviance reached proportions where it challenges the system-maintenance capacity of the regime. Whether its manifestations will represent a threat to the legitimacy of given regimes in the future, however, remains to be seen. The outcome will be determined, first, by the ultimate success or failure of each regime in efforts to socialise (and resocialise) all elements of society; second, by the degree to which the social norms and values promoted by the regimes are in balance with one another and are accommodated to the realities of increasingly sophisticated and differentiated modernising societies; and, third, perhaps, if one accepts the view that rising levels of deviance indicate recognition by the regime of the functionality of some forms of deviance, by the degree to which an understanding develops by which the regime grants autonomy to its citizens in some areas, in exchange for a tacit commitment on the part of the citizenry that it will not use greater autonomy to challenge the Communist order. [Shapiro, 1978:37]

History has now answered some of these questions. Clearly socialisation in submission to the state has proved inadequate. It also seems probable that the regimes of eastern Europe proved too inflexible to accommodate the social and technological development demanded by comparisons to capitalist democratic states. Thirdly, Shapiro seems to have shown considerable insight into the dangers to the authoritarian state that is involved in manoeuvres that now tend to be associated with the term *perestroika*.

The categorisation of diversity of behaviour as deviance is seemingly an inevitable concomitant of coercive regimes. That this eventually constitutes a threat to the

sustainability of social arrangements also seems a reasonable inference both from theories of adaptation such as that of Buckley [1981], and from experience. Even in China, in which the traditional Confucian culture of respect for authority may have reinforced the primacy of the state, market institutions have become an essential part of policy. [Xinan and Ye, 1989], even though Sen was able to write in 1973 that

the question of dissociating choices from the individualistic preferences and individual welfare seems to have been fairly central to the Chinese experiment on work motivation and the cultural revolution. [Sen, 1973:100]

While individualism and diversity may be seen as of intrinsic merit to many people in many cultures, self-interest as a means to a wider end of economic productivity has not passed unnoticed in states other than China. Indeed, while Russia since the counter-revolution hardly supplies evidence of the inevitable vitality of capitalist reform, the evidence on productivity in the centrally planned economy indicates that coercion may evince intrinsic liabilities in the organisation of production.

The problems of a centrally planned economies have been analysed many times, and the sheer complexity of the task is a common theme. In addition, many perverse incentives have been identified: notable amongst these are the reservation of productive capacity, and inattention to quality, to technological investment, and to cost effectiveness. [Goldman, 1973:301; Dyker, 1992:177] In addition, management of the economy becomes even more complex when data is manipulated for ideological reasons [Flakierski, 1992:172]; and, as Przeworski has argued, common ownership fails to resolve certain problems familiar to western economists:

stealing from oneself is individually rational, since the part privately appropriated [or not performed] is larger than the individual's share of the common loss. [Przeworski, 1991:116]

Khanin described the consequences thus:

A crisis in the economy (as in medicine) is a temporary state of decline, which ends with recuperation. The prerequisites of recuperation are laid during the period of the crisis. In a catastrophe, by contrast, a self-destructive mechanism is operating, impeding the revival of the economy. Such a self-destructive socio-economic mechanism became rooted during the years of the totalitarian regime in the USSR. [Khanin, 1992:10]

A further quotation demonstrates that Khanin's assessment is hardly, if at all, exaggerated.

Why amidst all this capital deepening, and in the aftermath of an industrialisation drive...did productivity manage to decline by around 3 per centage points over 25 years?An economic history of the country since 1930 is the history of investment ratios consistently in the region of 25-30% of national income, comparable to high investment western economies like the West German and the Japanese. The problem in the Soviet Union has been the escalating inefficiency with which investment funds so mobilised have been moved.

[Dyker, 1992:144,204]

Is low productivity inevitable in a coercive society? The apparent exceptions tend to be special cases. Singapore is a highly authoritarian state, but the authority is directed towards social conditions which support a *laissez faire* economy. Campos has written

on behalf of the World Bank that "critical and most fundamental principle" that was held in common by the high-performing Asian economies was the creation of institutions building trust that the benefits of economic growth would be equitably shared [Campos, 1993:6]. Voluntary submission to a national plan is not coercion in the totalitarian sense; and perceived equity in distribution does much to offer incentive to those whose work is highly disciplined. In the quintessentially coercive state, there is no need to be concerned with such issues.

The case of the Soviet Union exemplifies this point. Inequity is perhaps the characteristic of a communist regime that is least consistent with its ideology, so that its prevalence is a reasonable indicator of the effect of centralisation of power in such a context. The pattern can be followed in Scott's history:

By the middle 1920s, then, Lenin the communist has established the basis of a highly differentiated pattern of inequalities....The most significant change that Stalin made to the structure of inequality and economic differentials was to impose a cloak of secrecy around it.....Kruschev's efforts to remove the rigidities of the Stalinist system were, however, blocked by the vested interests of the powerful and the privileged.....The Brezhnev regime saw a reaffirmation of differentials and privileges in official policy. [Scott, 1994:139,140]

The ratio of income *circa* 1978 could be calculated, despite the secrecy, as the disparity between the monthly salary of a marshal of the Red Army of about R2,000 and the maximum pension of R120 [*ibid*]. At a ratio of over 16 to 1, this contrasts interestingly with the figures quoted by Phillips of the concentration of pre-tax household income in the west *circa* 1980. There is some distortion since the data has been calculated in quintiles, but it is nevertheless interesting to note that although the ratio in the USA was of the order of 12 to 1, and in Britain 8 to 1, in Japan, the

Netherlands, Sweden and West Germany the ratio was no higher than 6 to 1. [Phillips, 1991:9]. Another measure of inequality reinforces, though it does not duplicate, these data. The Gini coefficient, which measures the deviation from equal distribution, gives a figure for 1967 of 0.28 for non-agricultural households in the USSR [LeGrand, 1985:10]. In Britain the comparable figure for 1975 to 1979 was steady at approximately 0.373 [Ruehl, 1985:13], though it rose swiftly to 0.4 within two years of the Thatcher government taking office. Allowing for the lower wages and massive employment in agriculture in comparison to other industries in the USSR, [Scott, 1994:141; Flakierski, 1992:174-5] it certainly does not appear that there is necessarily a vast disparity in the income distribution between a centralised communist economy and market democracies.

Inequalities in a communist state may always be attributed to consensus on rewards, and therefore equitable, or even to inevitable, if temporary, market effects. Many might be wary of taking high profile work without incentives to compensate for the risks. The likeliest explanation, however, might be thought to be that those in power can reward themselves and their supporters, even in the context of an egalitarian ideology.

The Free Market

The free market ideal-type also contains inherent weaknesses. Marshall's classic text on markets helps to illustrate why:

Of course some of those who are really willing to take 36s. rather than leave the market without selling, will not show at once that they are ready to accept that price. And in like manner buyers will fence, and pretend to be less eager than they really are. So the price may be tossed hither and

thither like a shuttlecock, as one side or the other gets the better in the 'higgling and bargaining' of the market. But unless they are unequally matched: unless, for instance, one side is very simple or unfortunate in failing to gauge the strength of the other side, the price is likely to be never very far from 36s.; and it is nearly sure to be pretty close to 36s. at the end of the market. [Marshall, 1936:270]

In terms of a description of how self-interested and deceptive relations take place, there is much to praise in this description. As a recommendation for the total management of society there are many issues that it would clearly fail to address.

Firstly, the very idea that the equilibrium of the market is other than a theoretical model assumes that all other things are both equal and static. If the market did clear, as Marsall suggests, then one might claim that

resources are allocated in such a way that all gains from trade are exhausted, no-one can be better off without someone being worse off, and the resulting distribution of welfare would not be altered under a unanimity rule. [Przeworski, 1991:101]

This is the Pareto outcome, which is "in itself a very limited good" [Sen, 1973:105], and notorious for its aggregation of welfare irrespective of the utility of a just society. Referring again to Sen, it can be argued that

If the utility of the deprived cannot be raised without cutting into the utility of the rich, the situation can be Pareto optimal but truly awful. [Sen, 1994:6]

Yet even if one accepts Pareto optimality as an equitable outcome, the idea that it might come about through a free market is extremely suspect. There is an implicit assumption that markets do behave rationally, and another that there is no cost in adjusting to market influences, neither of which is rationally sustainable.

Indeed, the supposed capacity of the free market to achieve its equitable and productive goals is dependent on assumptions that are clearly not related to any commonly observed circumstances. The necessary conditions appear to be utterly implausible:

perfect information: this is clearly impossible, if only because of the cost to the purchaser of discovering the provenance of every good, and the perceived interest of the seller in disguising negative aspects of the production process;⁵

free entry and exit to the market: differential access to information, capital and markets makes this an implausible ideal;

a homogeneous product: for this to be attainable it would be necessary to suppose both that there was no branding of goods, that substitution between categories of goods and services was impossible, that ancillary services such as distribution were uniform, and that all the other free market conditions applied, which is not the case;

large numbers of buyers and sellers: every company, given business rationality, is seeking to achieve a monopoly, and given economies of scale, the

⁵ It is interesting to note that Adam Smith was heartily sceptical of the possibility of a free market. He wrote that any proposal for a new law from the mercantile class ought always to be listened to with great precaution, ought never to be adopted till after having been long and carefully examined, not only with the most scrupulous, but with the most suspicious attention. It comes from an order of men whose interest is never exactly the same with that of the public, who have generally an interest to deceive and even to oppress the public, and who accordingly have, upon many occasions, both deceived and oppressed it. [Smith, 1976:267]

concentration of economic power is a consistent historical trend [Hobsbawm, 1968:§11; Donaldson, 1981]. Certainly, there is a flux in the concentration; but the change in the name of the monopolist does not significantly alter the evidence of the distortion to the market. [Criteria of free market *from* Morgan, 1985:7]

The free market remains an idealised model. There have been attempts to assert that despite its purely abstract nature, it provides a reliable predictive mechanism, and may therefore be considered a positivist descriptive mechanism [Friedman, 1979]. The notorious inaccuracy of econometric projections scotches this proposition to any but the true devotee of theory before experience. [Brauer,1993b:537]. In terms of wider criteria, it must also be evident that even were reductive economics predictively successful, it would not follow that the claims for the equity, productivity, sustainability and diversity of market outcomes were sustained.

The idea that free market transactions optimise equity is an inference from suspect premises, not an objective observation. Marshall, typically of theoretical economists, marginalises the assumption that any participant in the market has an advantage - "But unless they are unequally matched... " - whereas to critics of this view it is evident that such inequalities are endemic to any but an imaginary model.

All we need to see is that one partner is compelled by need, the other by want; the latter can wait while the former, pressed by need cannot. As a result the terms of trade will mirror the distribution of power....We can now recognise that the concept of 'market failure' as used in conventional economics is misleading. It implies that the market is an inherently perfect allocator, and when left to operate by itself will lead to optimum economic conditions..... [but] contrary to what conventional economics

posits, so called market failure is inherent in the nature of the market itself. [Lux and Lutz, 1988:27,28]

We do not enter the market with equal access to information, influence, capital, or preparation, nor with identical positions relative to risk and urgency, so that the significance of the disparity between model and observable circumstances can scarcely be considered trivial. The necessary equity of market outcomes exists only in hypothesised circumstances which do not prevail, and arguably could not even possibly obtain in any plausible projection of human development.

Nevertheless, market theorists can reasonably argue that, except in an ideal world, distribution according to needs would fail to provide the appropriate incentives. Distribution on the grounds of perceived merit has been accepted both by neo-classicists [market value] and by Marxists [labour input], but the difficulty is that merit "is a bit of an accident not only in its origin, but also in its being treated as merit." [Sen,1973:105] Equity would seem to demand that compensations for disadvantage be taken into account, since

A society that permits significant inequalities among its members in advantages and disadvantages for which they are not responsible, will be perceived as failing to treat them equally; it distinguishes in its treatment of them along morally arbitrary lines. [Nagel, 1991:106]

A more particular point has been made, however, in the argument for a co-operative ideology: that where the market is unfettered there will be a tendency towards intensifying differentiation. Intuitively this makes sense, since those who are in an advantageous position will have the power to reinforce their own privileges. Indeed, social mobility data for the UK, inadequate though they may be [personal

communications: Peter Linthwaite, ESRC; Lisa Harker, Child Poverty Action Group; Colin Robinson, IEA] suggests that even over a period in which redistribution could be said to have remained a consensual ideology for most of the polity most of the time, the accident of birth, and the advantages to which that is attached, appear to be the most significant variable in determining the rewards that society offers.

There are, of course, too many variables to make any assessment of this issue easy, but ideological shifts in government help to show how an increased devotion to market outcomes tends to lead to intensifying differentiation. Phillips has shown how the mean incomes of the top 5 per cent of income recipients in the USA and of the highest quintile accelerated sharply after Reagan became President on a free market platform. [Phillips, 1991:13] By contrast, that of the lowest quintile fell, and of the second lowest barely held its own. The qualitative observation that

Poverty breeds a style of life which reinforces the conditions which lead to poverty. Resources which might lead to betterment and development are drained out. [Fusfeld, 1973:269]

is not seriously challenged by the quantitative data. A similar reversal of long term trends towards equitable redistribution took place in Britain after the accession of Thatcher [Ruehl, 1985:13]. There is thus at least *prima facie* evidence that the theoretical disposition of the free market to intensify differentiation is supported in practice, to the extent that the OECD, traditionally of a free market disposition, warned that wage inequality could prove a threat to the social fabric [OECD,1996].

A more comprehensive view, based on analysis of quantitative data, is offered by Williamson:

there is enough historical evidence to suggest that: most newly industrialising countries in the nineteenth century did undergo rising

inequality before undergoing rising equality in the twentieth century; most did not undergo a rise in poverty rates, although the rate of escape from poverty was slow where rising inequality was pronounced; rising inequality never played a critical role in making rising rates of non-human capital accumulation possible; and rising inequality did play a crucial role in making rising rates of human capital accumulation difficult.

[Williamson, 1991:138]

Several important points may be made in connection with Williamson's conclusions. Firstly, the notion that inequality is a pre-requisite of growth is contradicted. Secondly, in explanation of the phenomena described above, he argues that "we are led back to factor markets in searching for the sources of inequality, and to the labour markets in particular." [*ibid*:20]

Here is a particular and crucial element in the structural failure of free market theory to contribute to equitable outcomes. In this context, theory is only very tenuously applicable to circumstance, since labour markets are in no wise free markets. There is no homogeneity; free entry is constrained by skills, location, legislation, and restrictive practices; information is imperfect; and only in a full employment economy can there be said to be many buyers in comparison to sellers of labour. Inequality is thus to some extent administered through the labour markets, and the twentieth century equalisation process, though partly attributable to full employment policies which stimulated growth in recession and kept labour demand high, was also due to compensatory public investment in education, and to laws which redressed the imbalances of power in the labour market. The equalisation process may thus be seen as owing to constraints on the free market rather than due to its operation.

If we are to reach a reasonable assessment of the evidence, we may have to rely on instances where there is a marked change of national policy, such as the policy reverse from Keynesianism to the laissez faire ideologies of Reagan and Thatcher. Where the variables are too many to ever have completely reliable evidence, the change of government from a redistributive consensus to one in which redistribution is supplanted by a safety net ideology, and which seeks to free the labour market from inconveniences to employers, may be as close as we can find to convincing empirical evidence of the effects of free market ideology. Between 1979 and 1992 in Britain the proportion of the population living on less than 50% of the average income after housing costs rose from 9% to 25% [CPAG, 1996]. Unless one supposes that some 9 million people have become degenerate in the space of a dozen years, or were undeserving of their income before 1979, even such simple data seems to indicate that only on a very curious understanding of merit can the free market be thought to lead to equitable outcomes.

The second criterion, productivity, is very narrowly defined in terms of market transactions. Referring back to Marshall, it is evident that the market mechanism is intended to make any sympathetic concern for others superfluous. In such circumstances, social and emotional needs can only be thought to be addressed on a very confrontational interpretation of human nature. Alienation would seem to be a certain outcome of such an ideology. In Scanlon's words

Having a system in which certain goods and services are exchangeable and can be purchased may further attitudes towards those goods, towards others, and towards ourselves that one may rationally wish to avoid.

[Scanlon, 1977:45]

Furthermore, as has already been suggested, immediate decisions cannot be considered as an expression of unmediated self-understanding. Productivity comes to be measured in terms of volume of economic transactions, rather than the production of human welfare, even though the health of the market is not identical to the health of the community or the individuals within it.

The question isnot whether, under the existing circumstances of individual habit and social custom, a given expenditure conduces to the particular consumer's gratification or peace of mind; but whether aside from acquired tastes and from the canvas of usage and conventional decency, its result is a net gain in the comfort or in the fulness of life. Customary expenditure must be classed as waste in so far as the custom on which it rests is traceable to the habit of making an individual pecuniary comparison - in so far as it is conceived that it could not have become customary and prescriptive without the banking of this principle of pecuniary respectability or relative economic success. [Veblen, 1925:99,100]

Where Veblen concentrates on the political ideology, Galbraith was as much concerned by the influence of the commercial:

Production only fills a void that has itself created. Consumer wants can have a bizarre, frivolous, or even immoral origins, and an admirable case can still be made for a society that seeks to satisfy them. But the case cannot stand if it is the process of satisfying wants that creates the wants.... Because the society sets great store by ability to produce a high living standard, it evaluates people by the products they possess. The urge to consume is fathered by the value system which emphasises the ability of society to produce. The more that is produced, the more that

must be owned in order to maintain the appropriate prestige. [Galbraith, 1973:89]

This point of view has been challenged by Hayek, but not very convincingly, one might think:

The innate wants are probably confined to food, shelter, and sex. All the rest we learn to desire because we see others enjoying various things. To say that a desire is not important because it is not innate is to say that the whole cultural achievement of man is not important. [Hayek, 1973:202]

On the contrary: much of the rest of what we learn to desire is learned through the skilful but mercenary persuasion of those whose profit lies in making us dissatisfied with what we have. Furthermore, the question at issue is not whether the whole cultural achievement of people is important or not; the question is whether it is designed to benefit a few or the whole, and the sustainability or triviality of that perceived benefit.

To interpret this debate - individual choice vs collective welfare - in the context of systemic discourse, it may be said that the outcome of the whole system may not be predictable from the components alone. Localised individual rationality does not necessarily lead to the optimisation of either individual or collective circumstances. Keynes demonstration of this in respect to the individual rationality of firms in a depression is an adequate confirmation of this principle; and one may share Tobin's mystification that

the preferences of individuals are only worthy of respect when they are expressed in the markets ..[while] ...the preferences of the very same individuals expressed politically should be regarded as distortions. [Tobin, 1973:168]

Since information about the consequences of both economic and political decisions is always incomplete and counterfactual, neither system can be presented as an inherently reliable producer of desirable outcomes [Fried, 1977:185].

Neither equity nor productivity, then, is served as well by the free market as the abstract theory would lead one to suppose. Equity is not achieved because the distributions of the market are affected by factors associated neither with merit nor with need. Productivity, though great in some respects, is limited: firstly by the tendency of the ideology to act against empathic social and psychological needs; and secondly by the distortion of needs to meet the interests of the producer. Furthermore, Glyn quotes the World Bank as denying "that income inequality leads to higher growth. If anything, it seems that inequality is associated with slower growth." [Glyn, 1992:20]

The diversity that is one of the proudest claims of the free market ideology is also open to question. Essentially, those social arrangements which support commercial competition frequently threaten those others which include amongst their aims non-market objectives. Immediate individual rationality may support shopping at hyper-markets, but the cumulative effect is the throttling of small town centre enterprises, which may not be so desirable to a minority of citizens; or even, perhaps, to the majority. It is only through intervention in the free market that oligopolistic tendencies are curtailed and diversity sustained; from which it follows that the free market is inherently opposed to diversity as well as supportive of it.

In a general sense, the all pervasive application of market ideology may be seen simply as an interference in the natural tendency to operate in another manner. It is not purely libertarian. It may be less intensive than a totalitarian state, but conformity

to its demands can be just as intrusive and unforgiving towards those who do not conform to the requirements of capitalist society.

The individual had to succeed or be lost, forgotten, thrown upon the scrap heap. The individual who could not make a fortune or secure a niche for himself had to face poverty, isolation, neglect, unemployment and possibly scorn and abuse. Therefore friction was the essence of life.

Against such a background of experience, law is a feeble instrument indeed, and custom has no roots. [Tannenbaum, 1938:28]

More formally, the extension of Durkheim's theories of alienation in the twentieth century USA led to the perception that culturally defined success goals forced those who could not succeed by institutionalised means towards the alternative positive role of innovator, or the deplorable fate of overconformity, retreat from society, or rebellion. [Merton, 1938]

With this appreciation came the recognition that deviance is

not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'. [Becker, 1963:9]

One might feel it necessary to qualify this position by accepting that, for example, socio-pathological terrorism cannot be met with other than defensive hostility; but much crime can also be viewed as the pursuit of normative goals by non-institutional means, by those who do not have access to institutional levers. In recognition of this, Sumner has argued that the interest in deviance in the mid-twentieth century USA represented

part of a process of moral renewal and ethical reconstruction, part of a social democratic movement which held that society itself was the patient. [Sumner, 1994:314]

To repeat one of the slogans that I habitually use: the health of the market is not identical with the health of the community; and to doubts about authentic diversity in tangible productivity must be added doubts about the opportunities for attitudinal and behavioural diversity that are available within a society constituted through a free market ideology.

While the free market is less intensive than totalitarianism, then, it may be viewed as imposing constraints on behaviour which lead to alienation, and a self-reinforcing labelling of outsiders [Becker, 1963]. Behaviour that is not valued in the market is scarcely valued at all, as the demotic query "If you're so clever, why aren't you rich?" amply indicates. For deviants to be re-incorporated into society requires positive steps that the individualistic market society is not inclined to take; and, indeed, requires a recognition that the market does not fulfil all justifiable perspectives of what constitutes a good life.

The fourth criterion is sustainability. Two aspects are worthy of particular consideration. One is political sustainability, since an adaptive system reduces the costs of transformation. The other aspect is environmental sustainability.

What threatens Spaceship Earth is a profound imbalance between the totality of systems by which human life is maintained and the totality of demands, industrial as well as agricultural, technological as well as demographic, to which that capacity to support life is subjected.

[Heilbroner, 1973:174]

The *prima facie* case against the free market in this respect is that

The efficiency of markets depends on the identity of private costs and social costs. As long as the brick-cement producer must compensate somebody for every cost imposed by his production, his profit maximising

decisions about how much to produce, and how, will also be socially efficient decisions. [Ruff,1993:23]

Quite simply, it is in the interests of the profit maximiser to externalise costs; and the costs of enforcing internalisation are habitually too great to be realistically applicable [Turvey, 1993:139]. Nor should it be forgotten that social costs can also be externalised. Massey has argued effectively that the capacity of large scale industrial concerns to relocate in pursuit of profit maximisation devolves the social costs of adjustment on the original locality and the wider society [Massey, 1981:312,313]. Discontinuity once a path has been established is not recognised as a responsibility of those who absorbed the benefits of social investment.

Even the most ardent advocates of the free market seem to have accepted this point.

It is precisely the existence of such indivisible matters - protection of the individual and the nation from coercion are clearly the most basic - that prevents exclusive reliance on individual action through the market. If we are to use some of our resources for such indivisible items, we must employ political channels to reconcile differences. [Friedman, 1973:149]

Of course, the inadequacy of the free market is not trumpeted in this respect, but it is evident that the internalisation of environmental costs, to the extent that has taken place, has been a consequence of political action, not of the market [IISD,1995:Robinson,1992]. This impression is reinforced when one considers the United Nations *Nations of the Earth Report* [1992]. While those societies whose ideological ground has shifted attribute many of the problems to the socio-economic structures that previously prevailed, the capitalist economies, such as the USA and the UK prefer to avoid the topic. The Netherlands, however, is reasonably explicit:

The dependence on other countries for raw material and income from exports means that performance of the Dutch economy and the standard of living of the population are partly maintained by exploiting the 'ecoscape' of other countries. This in turn causes the unsustainable production of underpriced commodities and environmental degradation, particularly in the developing world. [*ibid*:vol 3, 162]

As for political sustainability, the record is impressive on a selective view. In part this may be an impression created by the simplistic historical determinism which obsessed many critics of the system. Lenin, for example, would appear to have offered a poor prediction in claiming that

..before the respective national finance capitals will have formed a world union of "ultra-imperialism", imperialism will inevitably explode, capitalism will turn into its opposite. [Lenin *cited in* Arrighi, 1978:14]

However, as has already been argued, the adaptability of the market system is a product of the liberal democratic systems within which it has been embedded. Both the political and environmental sustainability of the capitalist states is dependent not on the free market but on the constraints to the free market which arise from political action.

Summary on coercion and the market

Comparisons between various forms of government are rarely satisfactory;

The discrepancies in accounting conventions and in weights according to which different outputs are aggregated, the startling disparities in the use of inputs, the differences in starting positions and in comparative

advantage render judgements almost meaningless; [Przeworski, 1991:119]

For the purposes adopted here the dissatisfaction may be doubled, since the examples only approximate to the ideal-type dynamics under discussion.

Nevertheless, it may be said of the individualistic market dynamic that

There is a personal dimension of life in which egalitarian impartiality has no place, but which interacts with the public domain to generate inequalities that raise serious issues of social justice. Individual choices and efforts and personal attachments which are in themselves unexceptionable combine on a large scale and over time to produce effects that are beyond individual control and grossly unequal. [Nagel, 1991:120]

As for the likelihood of co-operation degenerating into another form of elite administration, Przeworski feared

that the historical lesson is more radical, that what died in Eastern Europe is the very idea of rationally administering things to satisfy human needs - the feasibility of implementing public ownership of productive resources through centralised command; the very project of basing a society on disinterested co-operation - the possibility of dissociating social contributions from individual rewards. If the only ideas about a new social order originate today from the Right, it is because the socialist project...failed in the East and in the West. True, the values of political democracy and social justice continue to guide social democrats such as myself, but social democracy is a programme to mitigate the effects of

private allocation and market allocation, not an alternative project of society. [Przeworski, 1991:7]

Perhaps Przeworski would be less downcast if he recognised that the equitable management of a variety of social technologies can be seen as a radically transformative process which might meet his ideals. Co-operation is not without its problems, however.

Co-operation

In the first place, let a simple proposition be established as a commitment. I suppose that if all instances of divergent interests could be resolved by equitable negotiation, there would be no justification for any measure of coercion, or any need for costly devices such as money. Alas, although I have an explicit bias towards co-operation in this argument, certain factors force me to qualify this view. The two great obstructions to the ideal are, firstly, exploitation, often of trust or of power; and secondly, scale, with its concomitant of complexity, and thus of exponentially increasing cost.

Once the basic proposition has been explored, issues arising from political responses will be investigated. Since the magic mechanism of the market has already been discussed, it will receive comparatively little attention.

Olson constructed a logic of collective action which led to the conclusion that any large scale co-operative polity would tend to degenerate owing to the costs of

supporting the group, and the impossibility of ensuring that public goods would be equitably funded [Olson, 1968]. His pessimistic view does not have to be accepted in its entirety to recognise it as one description of a set of problems which are inherent to the practice of voluntary social co-ordination.

In effect, the first of the problems to which he refers is one of scale. As numbers increase, so too does the difficulty and expense of achieving a voluntary consensus. This assertion is supported in theory by the multiplication of diverse objectives, the geometric progression of their relationships, and by the arguably exponential increase in the complexity of language as an attempt is made to find an adequate overlap between different vocabularies and usages. Secondly, co-operation is based on trust, which is a form of public good. Anyone may take advantage of trust, and, by doing so, does more than simply fail to contribute to it; they contribute to its erosion. For this reason it is hard to see co-operative modes of behaviour completely renouncing all forms of coercion. The two problems of co-operation may therefore be seen as those of scale and of exploitation. How does one achieve coherence amidst complexity without relying on coercion or spurious magic mechanisms such as the free market?

One possible answer is that the market is an effective response to the problem of scale. The discovery of a mechanism that approximates to voluntary exchange, but which has far lower transaction costs, might readily arouse admiration; and the introduction of a medium of exchange with an approximation of universal acceptance could provide this. Money and the market make a lot of practical sense as a response to the problem of scale.

Similarly, restrained coercion might be a suitable response to the problem of exploitation; not a simple reversion to the use of force. Collective decisions would be

taken as to when trust was being abused and must be constrained; and the objective would not be vengeance, but reform.

Thus market exchange and coercion may be seen as responses to the weaknesses of the social dynamic which is intrinsically best designed to meet our needs. It is interesting to compare this argument with Nozick's claim that his ultraminimalist state is just on the grounds that it could be derived rationally from a state of nature in a morally permissible way [Nozick, 1974:293]. This moral epistemology is dubious.

Norman pertinently asked

How can we possibly determine what rights people would have in a state of nature, if such a condition is a purely imaginary one? There are no apparent constraints in determining what rights we may choose to ascribe to them.... Not only does the hypothesis of a state of nature fail to illuminate the concept of rights, it is quite generally a useless fiction.

[Norman, 1987:139]

The same principle applies here. I don't know how or in what sequence or stages social technologies have emerged. However, I nevertheless find it useful to think of coercion and the market as compensatory technologies, of little interest if it weren't for weaknesses in an otherwise satisfactory system of co-operative self-management.

This theoretical perspective is intelligible in many contexts. From the neo-classical economic perspective, voices are often heard asking: "How can the individual judge what is socially desirable or what actions he can take that will benefit the community?"

[Friedman, 1984:11] To relate this unambiguously to the present argument: Friedman is, in effect, constructing the problem as one of complexity, and implicitly of scale; and

even if his response to the issue is different from mine, we each seek to escape coercion.

His response is to trust the market. Mine is to try to understand the potential of equitable social construction. As the market is to the economy, it can be argued, so is leadership to politics; a set of techniques intended to mitigate the effects of scale and complexity. They differ in that market assumes that the rules necessary for an equitable society are natural laws, while political approaches require the additional stage of procedural co-operation.

It must be borne in mind, however, that persuasion and leadership often verge on the coercive; and are sometimes blatantly so. Coercion is not only made manifest in the form of fisticuffs. Nevertheless, to use Sooklal's phrase, leadership can be co-operative, if the leader is "a broker of dreams." [Sooklal, 1991]

Two distinctive views help to locate this metaphor somewhere between an authoritarian and self-organising society. Shils used the paradigm of centre and periphery for his analysis:

The centre, or the central zone, is a phenomenon of the realm of values and beliefs. It is the centre of the order of symbols, of values and beliefs, which govern society....The central value system is not the whole of the order of values and beliefs espoused and observed in the society. The value systems obtaining in any diversified society may be regarded as being distributed along a range. There are variants of the central value system running from hyperaffirmation of some of the components of the major, central value system to an extreme denial of some of these major elements....[Shils, 1975:3,4]

Exploitation from the unaccountability and opacity of the centre, and of deviance from the periphery, is also expressed:

Authority has an expansive tendency. It has a tendency to expand the order which it represents towards the saturation of territorial space. The acceptance of the validity of that order entails a tendency towards its universalisation within the society over which authority rules....They [*the officers of authority*] use their powers to punish those who deviate and to reward with their favour those who conform... [*ibid*:8]

Ewin's argument is normative, and constructs a model of a more fluid, idea-mediated social environment.

...morality and a social or communal life presuppose a background of co-operation for people and therefore presuppose, by and large, those qualities of character which are necessary for co-operation.....What I object to are the ideas that morality can be accounted for exhaustively in terms of rules, that all moral justifications depend on moral rules, or that morality consists ultimately of rules rather than of ideas, virtues, notions, or what have you. [Ewin,1981:7,21]

Between them, Ewin and Shils construct a continuum between the formalised rule and the consensual, substantive, and often tacit ethic to which Rothschild-Witt refers; and within that continuum are many processes. Some sets of rules are simply imposed, but co-operation is always likely to give rise to formalised rules as a response to its weaknesses.

The response is not without its dangers. Responding to scalar problems through formalisation of procedures can steer a community into bureaucratic coercion, as

Abrahamson [1977] clearly saw in his study of the relationship between participation and bureaucracy. Bureaucracy may be seen as that form of government which represents "a tendency within an organisation to disengage itself from those very interests which it is supposed to work for" [*ibid*:22], reflecting very clearly degeneration through the emergence of formal coercive rules as a distortion of the representative ideal.

In principle, the legitimisation of the executive bureaucracy is through representation, which is intended to translate the co-operative ideal into a practical form. Different views have been held of the possibilities of attaining this. Amongst those whom Abrahamson cites are Weber: "Each form of administration demands some form of authority since its government requires that some kind of power to give order is delegated to a certain person." [Weber, 1968:545]; Marx, in that "In the communist society, where no class differences exist, bureaucracy becomes superfluous... absorbed by society" [Abrahamson, 1977:49]; and Michels, whose iron law states that "the demands of efficiency and democracy are always solved to the advantage of those forces acting on behalf of efficiency;" [*ibid*: 65].

Bureaucracy thus receives a mixed press as a response to the problem of exploitation arising from social technologies intended to deal with issues of scale. An alternative approach is to attempt a more radical transformation by avoiding the metaphor of hierarchy, and construing society in terms of networks, of which a key feature is the preference for trust and co-operation over power and authority [Thompson, 1991:243-246]. In effect, subsidiarity gives weight to the advantages of co-operation, whereas hierarchical views are more appreciative of the benefits of centralisation [Brauer, 1996; Ouchi, 1992].

Whichever of these responses one may prefer, the withdrawal of certain aspects of interpersonal negotiation clearly has to be legitimated. Leadership issues are not well incorporated in the paradigm, but their emergence in the process of the research suggests the possibility of doing so eventually.

Theoretically, however, the paradigm would appear to have good companions, and experience endorses the usefulness of the core idea: that the principal threats to co-operation may be seen as scale and exploitation.

That there are benefits to co-operation at more than the purely local level is encouraged by the research of Ostrom. In her analysis of managing common property resources, she makes use of a tripartite analysis. The political triad is familiar: the market and central direction are contrasted to "the capacity of the individual to extricate themselves from various types of dilemma situations." [Ostrom,1990:14] It is, however, important to note that the Common Property Resources [CPRs] with which she is concerned are managed exclusively; appropriators are a defined and inflexible group. Her models are therefore only applicable to a limited range of situations, and dependent on the extent to which "nesting" [subsidiarity] is feasible.

The empirical evidence she supplies of effectively managed common property resources in a variety of cultures is backed up by a theoretical examination of the logic of prisoners' dilemma games when applied to centralised coercion under conditions of uncertainty. Hardin's tragedy of the commons [Hardin,1968], which assumes that public goods will always be abused, fares rather poorly under this examination, even though Ostrom does suggest that the deontic operators - require, forbid, permit - are always present. The inevitability of coercion is therefore supported as a limit on co-operation, and she also concedes some limitations of scale as propounded by Olson.

The co-operative movement also provides plentiful evidence of the problems of scale and of exploitation. This often takes the form of degeneration; that is, the perception of individual deviance incurs some authoritarianism, though other factors such as efficiency or simple greed for power can also lead to an exploitation by an elite.

Cornforth *et al* have listed some of the explanations of degeneration: Marx suggested the infiltration of capitalist practice; Braverman argued that capitalism cannot tolerate autonomy; the Webbs stressed the lack of discipline; and Meister warned of managerialism [Cornforth *et al*, 1988:112]. Nevertheless the authors asserted that degeneration is not inevitable, even though simple collectives may be limited by size. They also helpfully identified three types of degeneration; *constitutional*, which relates principally to problems of commitment in membership; *goal* degeneration, which is a problem related to co-operative working in a commercial environment, and *organisational*, which concerns the hardening of hierarchies. Two of these types are exploitation issues; the first as a problem of exploitation of others' commitment, and the third either as a reaction to deviance or as an attempt to gain the privileges of authority. The second type interacts with these, but is essentially a problem of scale. Although there are some advantages in collective decision-making, having even five people discussing decisions is more costly than having one who listens, so that the edge competitors acquire may put instrumental pressures on co-operators.

The Basque Mondragon co-operative complex displays a number of these characteristics. The constraints of operating in a commercial environment have ensured that management is professional, though accountable, and discipline for deviance at work is accepted as necessary.

Cooperateurs may therefore tend to create for themselves a more 'disciplined' environment, although it is not clear that they themselves will perceive it as being more disciplined. The different nature of the incentive system induces members to align their priorities with those of the firm without compulsion. [Bradley and Gelb, 1983:48]

Financial incentives may appear coercive, but where co-operatively agreed, they represent regulative co-operation. On the issue of scale, since a number of strikes, there has been a limit placed on the size of any individual business within the family. However, although the ratio of wages has widened in response to the need for professional management [*ibid*, 18] degeneration into a centralised coercive structure based on market relations between capital and labour has not occurred.

That problems of scale and exploitation mar the co-operative ideal is reproduced in much of the literature on the subject, emerging in many different forms. Woolham, in discussing a whole food co-operative noted that

The informal style of organisation that was favoured appeared to rest upon a number of presuppositions: a bedrock of shared understandings and consensus about aims and objectives, about the future plans of the collective, about levels of mutual trust, and an assumption that all tensions and disagreements between members might be solved informally.....[*but*] ... the concepts of trust and commitment were not collectively defined but subject instead to continually changing definitions ...[Woolham, 1987:12]

At first sight this may not appear to be a scalar or exploitation problem, until one realises that it is the need for a continual devotion of resources to equitable negotiation of the norms of regulative co-operation that is at the heart of the difficulty.

Between two people, this might not be a problem. When five or fifty people are growing and changing in an fluctuating environment, some strategem is necessary.

Stryjan suggests that

The central challenge is ..that of 'shaping' members who are capable of successfully running their organisation, and of redesigning it so that it can accommodate and eventually mould its future members. In other words, the core process of self-management is that of reproduction of membership. [Stryjan, 1989:65]

However, although this appears to be a rational and humane response to the problem of diversity, it may still be viewed as a coercive measure to deal with the complexities arising from scale.

Develtere [1993] has argued that even questionable techniques such as this will be ineffectual unless the ascribed values are internalised. In an ingenious study of colonialism and co-operation, he shows how the organisational systems of co-operation were introduced by the Dutch, British, Belgians and French, but without the persuasive component of a coherent and assimilable ideology. Without this coherence, degeneration is assured. Where indigenous co-operative ideologies have been introduced by the state to legitimate co-operatives, or superimposed on existing institutions, Develtere remarks that they have become instruments of the state. Incoherence becomes an issue, related both to scale and to exploitation.

The reduction of all issues to these dimensions of scale and exploitation would be a denial of the multiplicity of perspectives, even though experience and theory seem

supportive of the feasibility of doing so. That is not the aim here. In proposing the model that has been produced here, the crucial test is whether it is useful. One test of the advisability of devoting resources to a trial is to see whether the argument makes sense within itself, is supported by evidence, is intelligible in the academic discourse relating to the issue and can withstand the challenges which arise from comparison with those other theories.

On the whole, it can be suggested that this has been achieved.

Validation reconsidered

The process that has just been undertaken is theoretical validation. Before moving towards a report of the field work devoted to the second phase of legitimisation, the importance of theory deserves another mention.

In the first place, whether the set of analytic tools is explicit or implicit, all analysis is grounded in theory as well as data. Even those methods that assert the primacy of data rely on theory to do so. Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory argument, as expressed by Rothschild-Witt, is as good an example as any:

theory generated from data....will have more power to predict and explain the subject at hand than will theory arrived at through speculation or logical deduction. [Rothschild-Witt, 1979:511]

Clearly they are relying on a coherent but particular epistemological theory. In so far as they are reminding us of the dangers of rationalism it is possible to go along with them. If their method is interpreted as an encouragement to recognise the categories that non-academics use, they share accommodation with co-generative researchers.

The difficulty with their approach is perhaps that they appear to dichotomise grounded theory and *a priori* reasoning [Glaser and Strauss, 1967:2-3]. I depend instead on the iteration between deduction and induction. One might ask, in relation to the criterion of consistency, if their epistemology is grounded.

Despite the thoroughness of their examples, the closest to a deduction from a *priori* reasoning that I could discover was their description of Etzioni's analysis of complex organisations [*ibid*: 142-144]; yet even here the contention is merely that his core variable of *compliance structures* is deduced from other logico-deductive classifications. Perhaps Etzioni did believe that this construct was so conceived; but the notion that *dominant groups in society have ways of directing the behaviour of others* strikes me as being one that has been expressed in many forms in literature, at least, before Etzioni's use of the idea in 1961. Try Shakespeare's *Richard III*, if you doubt me. Etzioni may have related a particular definition to various conceptual schemes, but he did not deduce, *a priori*, the idea.

Nor do I believe that Glaser and Strauss' category of social loss [*ibid*: 23 *et seq*] was derived any less from an oscillation between pre-existent interpretations of the world and their own experience. To believe that the category emerged independently of pre-suppositions necessitates the belief that Glaser and Strauss were somehow shielded in their journey through the educational system of the USA from the recognition that societies tend to assign differential values and entitlements to its members.

At the centre of this problem, then, is the attempt to overcome the problems of rationalism by laying spurious claim to an exemplary empiricism. Neither logic or experience, severally or together, however, allows us to claim that we can "accurately represent the world's prominent features." [*ibid*: 227]

Glaser and Strauss are redeemed for me by their practical renunciation of the theoretical claims into which their rhetoric leads them. We share commitments to the search for workable guides to action; to the generation of useful innovative constructs; to comparative analysis; to the continual adjustment and reformulation of theory; and to accessibility and eclecticism [*ibid*: 227,143, Part 1, 243,239,3].

While celebrating their contribution, however, we can also learn from their failures of validation; in particular, their presentation of their method as though they could generate categories independently of pre-existent theory. Let us accept that theory and experience are not merely interdependent. As sources, they are indistinguishable, and as resources they are inseparable.

Firstly, the selection of method, of data, and of a perceived problem area is either random or theoretically grounded. Secondly, categories may be added to *ad lib*, but, unless they are related by theory, it is hard to see what one does with them. Thirdly, if each research environment calls forth a different set of categories, there can be no learning except at the local level. Theory is required if we are to integrate apparently disparate views. If the aim is understanding leading to action, inductive data is inadequate, offering, in its virgin state, observation without explanation, and obstructing the construction of alternative understandings.

The perspective adopted here is that neither *a priori* nor *a posteriori* theories are adequate in themselves. To assume that theory can be generated from data without the selection of a precedent theory is inconsistent with the second of the sceptical assumptions; that is, that neutral observation is not feasible. To assume, on the other hand, that a *a priori* theory is complete is to contradict one of the sceptical assumptions; that the form of a language allows us to expose transcendent truths. From a sceptical

viewpoint, theory is justified by its utility; and both experience and theory suggest that each must be considered in relation to the other if utility is to be optimised.

Nor is there an end to the process, or a convergence on the truth. Each intervention changes that which is being described. Constant iteration is fundamental to the method of research described here.

In my previous experience I explored co-operative forms of social organisation. The abstractions from that experience, akin to Glaser and Strauss' grounding, matched the first stage of legitimation. This led to the present research, in which I refined the model I had constructed and took it back to a co-operative constituency [legitimation 2], before testing what emerged against companionable and contrasting theories [validation]. In the meantime, a new cycle has begun, rooted in the concerns expressed by those with whom I spoke [legitimation 1/cycle 2]. And so it goes.

The report on the fieldwork combines a reflection on L2/C1 [second stage of legitimation / first cycle] with an exploration of L1/C2 [first stage of legitimation / second cycle]. Chronology is less important than content to each of these attempts, so that the story of my field work is grouped for the most part around ideas rather than being temporally structured. I hope that this allows you to enter into my experience, both because that is why this has been written, and because the people I met were so damn interesting.

13. The process of the field work

The second stage of legitimation

The aim was to discover if the co-operative paradigm is legitimated by those whose behaviour appears to be validated by it; and simultaneously to refine the paradigm.

The process: following Polanyi [1967], there would seem to be reason to examine the components of the argument, and then to seek to understand it as a whole [gestalt].

The first step in the second stage of legitimation, then, involved something similar to construct validation; although, given the epistemological commitments adopted here, the mechanistic/statistical method that often accompanies such validation was not seen as likely to be the most productive. The second aspect was to present the paradigm in a more narrative/visual gestalt form, and discover if it was seen by participants as compatible with their own conception. At all times I took notes, and wrote these up within a few days, both as a record, and in order to concentrate my appreciation of what had been said.

The particulars: the first step was undertaken through a questionnaire. This broke the paradigm into simple assertions with which participants were asked to agree or disagree on a scale between 0 and 5. Where there was a negative response the issues were discussed to see whether the dissonance was semantic or structural.

When any problems arising had been discussed, participants were asked to read a narrative expression of the argument to assess whether, when the components were

assembled into a whole, the paradigm proved acceptable as a rationale of co-operation.

This two step approach took place within a more general drift away from the detailed towards the holistic. The later the field work, the greater the likelihood that I would simply relate the paradigm. Indeed, as I became more confident in presenting it, I found it possible to discuss someone's ideas first, and then superimpose the paradigm on their conceptualisation. My worries that this would set the issue up as one of confrontation was not realised. I found it relatively easy to present the paradigm in a way that allowed others to see it as an isomorph, or translation, of their view rather than as a challenge. Had there been no debate or dissonance I would have been concerned. In practice, however, participants would usually query some aspect of the paradigm; but the problem was almost always refinement, extension, a matter of emphasis or a semantic confusion. In summary, of the 117 interviewees, there are not more than eight whose support I would be hesitant to claim, and this is either because of linguistic difficulties or because, for one reason or another, the presentation was incomplete.

I am not suggesting that there has been unanimous agreement that the co-operative paradigm is the definitive argument. What the paradigm does allow is the presentation of a coherent explanation of the co-operative commitment within the discourse of political economy; and, where there is room for different interpretations of a co-operative response to circumstances, the paradigm helps to make apparent the reason for such equivocity.

The participants:

A brief outline of who was involved and in what way, followed by a more illustrative report of what took place, may be helpful. A statistical analysis of the characteristics of the participants appears as Appendix A. Although quantitative social research is in itself inadequate for an understanding of human behaviour, there is no suggestion here that it cannot draw attention to phenomena that are worthy of explanation.

| Location | Participants | Form of interview |
|---|--|--|
| Open University | colleagues | trial run of the questionnaire |
| Brighton | members of a wholefood co-op | questionnaire and narrative |
| Asilomar, California | self-organising stream at a conference | questionnaire and narrative |
| Oregon | members of co-operatives, a commune, and others | questionnaire and narrative |
| Dessau [east Germany] and <i>en route</i> | conference and personal contacts | questionnaire and narrative, narrative alone |
| India, Nepal, Bangladesh | some arranged meetings with academics, members of co-operatives, aid workers, and grass roots community workers, and some casual encounters which were afterwards developed. | no questionnaire; in most cases the narrative version of the paradigm was used, in a very similar form to that which appears in this thesis; in some cases this was impractical, either because of language, or because someone whose views I sought to understand was not used to sustained abstract construction. I have sought to represent that which I understood from our discussions, without claiming that they always supported the particular rationale expounded here; in some ways such interviews were closer to first than to second stage legitimisation. |
| Bristol | narrative | community sector workers |

| | | |
|--------|---|-----------|
| Others | Serendipity seemed to me legitimate, given that I make no claims that the participants form a representative sample. Two Brazilian friends who happened to visit, for example, or a Slovenian friend whom I visited, were just as able to contribute as those whom I selected through more calculated means; though of course they had to display co-operative behaviour to be invited. | narrative |
|--------|---|-----------|

The Open University

My first step was to construct an argument based on my years amongst co-operators, and my academic work to date. I then dismantled the argument into a series of propositions. The resulting questionnaire appears as appendix B.

I asked eight people for their responses. One threw the questionnaire into the bin on the principle that questionnaires are necessarily invalid. One agreed, absolutely, with everything I said, which I found equally unhelpful. Another was unavailable for discussion. Of the remaining five, each helped to sort out some initial problems of obscurity or ambiguity, so that by the time I took the questionnaire to Brighton, it had been thoroughly revised, and was much more accessible.

Having asked the participants to score their responses between 0 - *strongly disagree*, and 5 - *strongly agree*, it was possible to assess the result quantitatively. Agreement was taken to be an average response of 4 or more; and consensus demanded that the range of responses should be less than 2. There were 43 propositions, of which 32 were agreed, and on 32 of which there was consensus. 30 had consensual agreement.

Where the propositions averaged under 4, with a response range greater than 2, in all but two of the ten cases it was possible to identify ambiguities or semantic difficulties which could be remedied. In the ninth, which concerned the relations between merit, need and luck and the allocation of rewards, major restructuring was necessary. That particular formulation disappeared. The tenth proposition in this set, though interesting, was not essential and was dropped; it related to the comparative sophistication of coercion, free market theory, and co-operation as ideologies.

For neither of the two propositions on which there was consensus to disagree was there a score lower than 3 - *tend to agree*; one of the propositions claimed that *the quality of our lives is the quality of our awareness*, the other that we have a need to *feel that we have made a difference*. I inferred, in part from the subsequent discussions, that these were clumsily phrased or contextualised, and amended the propositions; and if each idea continued to stimulate debates, I never felt that either proposition was seriously challenged. Rather, those I spoke with proved to have subtle understandings of these issues which would bear more examination. Only one proposition, concerning the need for *protection from some of the dangers of the environment* was agreed without consensus, due to an obscure semantic objection from one respondent. At no later point did anyone have difficulty with accepting the idea.

One might have great fun with further mathematical analysis, but since the aim was to identify ambiguities and obscurities, this did not seem fruitful to me. In the event, although much subsequent refinement occurred, this initial process allowed me to make the questionnaire more accessible and reliable. Thereafter where there was disagreement I was able to identify quite readily the confusion, or the need to amend the paradigm. The principal example of the need to amend arose from my attitude

towards the market. I had not initially distinguished between market institutions and market ideology, so that even honest trade seemed to be the subject of my scorn.

That this was inappropriate quickly became apparent when I visited the wholefood shop in Brighton, even if I did not begin to resolve it until I visited Oregon. To many, the spirit of the argument was clear, but I am indebted in this and other cases to those who insisted on a clear formulation.

Brighton

The choice of a wholefood co-operative in Brighton as a starting place was circumstantial, but turned out to be a good one. I was at the time keen on the idea of doing a work-for-research exchange, both in order to compensate those whose time I took up, and as a way of becoming familiar with the habits and personalities of those with whom I spoke. As a result, I spent several happy days packing spices, selling flans, and washing up.

Over a period of a couple of weeks I interviewed seven members of the co-op: questionnaire; discussion; ask them to read the whole argument; and ask if they felt that it was an argument that was reasonably consistent with their point of view. All felt it was, though each had a nuance to add. These informed the development of the paradigm, though some comments were additions rather than refinements; and one discussion led to the eventual reform of the argument concerning the market.

One might ask how participants could agree and yet encourage change. Everyone, however, seemed to appreciate that there could not be an all-encompassing algorithmic rationale. Of greater usefulness would be an explication of attitudes which would allow intelligent discussion; and if, at times, the words on the written page failed

to express exactly what was understood in discussion, this was part of the process to which they were contributing. In the case of the market dynamic, it was clear to the Brightonians that I was not condemning their work, into which I cheerfully joined, yet we shared the belief that the Thatcherite ideology was both incredible and vicious. Particularly during these early stages, then, the acceptance was qualified by the admission that a particular form of ideas had yet to be structured and/or expressed concisely and precisely; but this is, if you think of it, an inevitable part of the process of mutual construction.

Another point might be made at this point. Although I started with a workers' co-operative, this was merely a convenience. My interest is in co-operation as a dynamic rather than with any particular manifestation of co-operation. There is much persuasive historical and analytic literature on co-operatives themselves [for example, Bartlett, 1993; Bartlett and Pridham, 1991; Bradley and Gelb, 1983; Clayre, 1980; Comforth and Stott, 1984; Comforth *et al*, 1988; Handysides, 1994; Holmstrom, 1993; Macfarlane, 1987; Robinson, 1986; Srivinas, 1993; Thomas, 1992; Kularajah, 1988; Qureshi, 1947; Oakeshott, 1978.] These are often technical manuals, however, rather than attempts to explore why co-operation might be a preferable approach to life, though the case studies in particular offer many insights into motivations and rationales. I would also like to point out that in all the co-operatives I've worked in, or those that I have visited or otherwise known, there have been recurrent problems of principle; wage differentials and decision-making processes being two familiar examples. Attempts to resolve issues of this type are often addressed in literature on co-operatives; for example, in Thomas and Comforth's model for democratic decision-making in worker co-operatives [Thomas and Comforth, 1989]. However, it becomes apparent that the model is intended to raise issues rather than provide an utterly reliable set of procedures for resolving them; so that the research I have undertaken

might be seen as approaching the same issues in another direction. Rather than working from experience to theory, I am encouraging reflection on experience in the light of theory. Each approach has, of course, its own utility.

ISSS and Eugene, Oregon

The conference of the International Society for Systems Sciences at Asilomar in California gave me another opportunity to test the argument in an academic context; and since there was a self-organising group within the conference, there was a ready-made set of participants. Indeed, the nature of this group may have had considerable influence on the increasing focus of the paradigm on the importance of social construction as the heart of co-operation.

At the time, however, my attention was still more on the disaggregated components than on the presentation of the argument as a whole. In that respect, this set of interviews was useful; with academics there was much of interest said on methodological issues, and there were seriously co-operative people amongst them.

In Eugene, however, I struck an even richer vein. Oregon has been a haven for those who tired of the Californian social revolution of the sixties, and Eugene, a medium-sized agricultural and university town, has attracted many of them. I was still working with the questionnaire/narrative method, and found that there were many acute perceptions about specific issues, such as the role of the market, centralisation and disaggregation, individualism and social responsibility, and decision-making processes. It was probably here that I became most aware of the urgency of sorting out my understanding of the market, since the most committed of co-operators here had none of my English middle-class prejudices about trade.

In addition, the narrative element of the process was moving slowly to the forefront, as I found it more possible to express the ideas fluently. The reductive questionnaire was gradually replaced by a report of the ideas which seemed to have something of the exploratory impetus of a story. Hereafter, narrative gradually subsumed the more analytic mechanistic presentation, without, I believe, any loss of coherence or detail.

An advantage of this was that people who would not have been willing or adept at the more laborious process could contribute to the gestalt. As those with whom I spoke helped me to find expression for the underlying ideas, and to relate them to each other, it became less necessary to ask for responses to partial analyses.

Simultaneously, those ideas which were presented obscurely were attaining new and more helpful forms; for example, Mallman's nine part analysis of needs was giving way to the idea of a *material, psychological, social, spiritual [?]* taxonomy. Such changes might be understood as indicating significant progress; if one can grasp the whole, and the whole is coherent, each part is explained by its context.

Nevertheless, the onerous and demanding business of questionnaire/narrative could only be gradually abandoned. I was amazed at how few people excused themselves from a process that would last two or two and a half hours, even if it was both pleasant and essential to frame the interviews in a social environment. No way did I expect to understand the comments that people had to offer unless I had spent some time in their company, either purely socially, or by lending a hand with some enterprise in which they were involved. At times this was tenuous; some people preferred to approach the interview as a deliberate choice to help me with the specific activity of interview. With others, however, I became involved in delightful friendships, during the course of which we would find illustrations for our debates in the way people used the public park, or the strip felling of the trees in the hills around Eugene.

Eastern Europe

Despite my increasing interest in the narrative form, I persisted with the questionnaire for the next trip I made, which was to a conference in Dessau, in what had been East Germany. This proved worthwhile, in that the participants there mostly had some academic background, but were attending as practical people with an interest in the social economy.

One particular aspect of the paradigm sorted itself out during this trip. Those with whom I'd spoken had accepted the notion that although *concern*, *consent*, *holism* and *listening* are essential to co-operative practices, the status of these principles had remained equivocal. In discussions here, I was edged, rapidly, towards the idea that any attempt to codify ideal speech is as likely to lead to authoritarianism as to equity. Rules are always open to abuse. Only understanding satisfies. Perhaps this trend in my thinking reflected the high number of east europeans amongst those with whom I spoke. After all, the communist dream had become something akin to a Communist nightmare through some such process.

Perhaps because of this, questions about ascribed membership were raised quite often; though I could never be certain which factors encouraged the salience of an issue in my research. Was it the development of the argument, the comments of participants, or wider environmental factors? One should not be surprised that in eastern Europe many people enquire how you choose with whom you should co-operate; yet in the quartet with whom I travelled the question had been of immediate consequence. (I'll tell you about that later.)

Discussions about coercion also led me at this stage to formulate more clearly the distinction between coercion as a central dynamic, and coercion used *reluctantly, reformatively, minimally, and only where ratified by agreed codes*. Not surprisingly, I was also becoming increasingly aware of the need to explain why, if each of the dynamics compensates for weaknesses in the others, co-operation should be given precedence. You now know how I reconstructed that; but not that it really sorted itself out on the Rajasthan Express, between Bombay and Delhi.

So it was with all aspects of the paradigm; ideas sewn somewhere, and germinating in another. On the codification of ideal speech I had recognised in Dessau that equitable construction remains indescribable in substantive terms. Respect for others, and the involvement of those affected by constructions, are largely unquestionable characteristics; but they do not allow us to specify how we or others should behave.

In India I came to the conclusion that it is attitude that matters, and that this is not definable. It is dependent on an holistic poetic understanding, and recognisable without being directly transferable. In Oregon I had observed this at a farming commune, even if I hadn't formulated the idea so clearly. We go back again to Polanyi, to the principle that in communication we are dependent on the intelligence of our audience to assemble the fragments that are conveyed into a grasp of meaning. If that induces acceptable behaviour, it is an incredible achievement, even if it is reproduced by each of us each day. Knitting together the ideas of over a hundred participants from around the world cannot be done as though ideas were building blocks; hence the continuing shift towards narrative and free response, rather than questionnaires.

An interlude in Hull

Before going to India I had been aware that the questionnaire might often prove cumbersome there. Because of this, I spent some time establishing what I understood to be the core of the argument, and portraying it in a visual pattern. Not only did this provide coherence to my efforts to understand what had gone before, it also enabled me to present the narrative without notes, more or less as a conversational piece. The degree of detail that I would include varied considerably with my audience, and at times I would enter the presentation from a different angle. Having that structure, however, allowed me to respond much more freely to my circumstances, while ensuring that the whole argument was presented.

A group of 52 third year students at the University of Hull gave me the chance to test my assumption that memory, if not necessarily understanding, would be improved by the visual presentation. The results are presented in appendix C, and the manner of presentation also made it easy to identify areas in which clarity was lacking. Since the major difficulty seemed to lie with the distinctions between *intuitive*, *regulative* and *procedural co-operation* I subsequently paid particular attention to elucidating this theme; though very often it would be expressed in the imagery of those with whom I was speaking.

India, Nepal and Bangladesh

Legitimation is a complex business, and the problems identified in advance did not disappear. There is no way of proceeding, as far as I can see, that allows any clear claim of legitimation; and where language barriers and cultural confusion play a part,

any claims are necessarily rather muted. Nevertheless, if co-operation is a rational response to human circumstances, the paradigm should be recognisable in some way to those who have not been impregnated with western cultural values.

Language in itself was not often a problem, in part because the paradigm had by now been simplified and clarified. More importantly, I was able to assemble a set of local images to illustrate the points I wished to present. To illustrate this point: short-term individual rationality suggests that in Kathmandu you simply throw your garbage into the street; or that, as an Indian bus driver, you simply draw up where you can get out of the bus station, even though this means that you are almost invariably blocking the exit for others. Images such as these are undoubtedly helpful, but do not necessarily permit you to convey a more complex integrated argument to others. With those who have been educated in the western tradition there is, of course, a common discourse; but I did not wish to exclude others on such grounds.

Because of this, where there were people who seemed, through their behaviour, likely to illuminate some aspect of the co-operative philosophy, I devoted time to learning from them. Typical of this approach was the observation, tempered by discussion, of the habits of two businessmen, one in Kathmandu, the other in south India. Each was happy to discuss particular issues, but with neither was it feasible to legitimate the paradigm. Nevertheless, I feel that my understanding was extended by our brief friendships.

In other instances, legitimation could only be claimed partially. The guru of Varanasi bus station was superb, but constructs the world in a different discourse. Logu, an indigenous member of an international commune at Auroville, has only recently learned to speak English. Neither could he be said to have legitimated the paradigm

through thorough understanding and approval, yet at a level of personal conviction, I am persuaded that each did; Harrihar the guru through the common metaphor of cricket, Logu through a conversation which would not have sounded out of place in the Archers, or some other demotic conveyor of moral debate.

Many of those with whom I spoke were highly educated, and were happy to spend a lot of time talking in general terms as well as discussing the paradigm itself. Included in this set were a number of Muslims, with whom I explored the issue of religious authoritarianism. An interesting contrast was provided by the Catholics with whom I spoke; and although the contrast between exogenous and endogenous morality remains an irrecoverable dichotomy, my presentation of the co-operative paradigm to 250 members and staff of a Catholic college in Kerala was received with great enthusiasm.

Narrative was the principal medium throughout this trip, and towards the end I was well able to make an insertion of the paradigm far less intrusive than the earlier process had allowed. I would explain what I was about, discuss the other's experience, and then present the argument in relation to their ideas. However, although this was preferable, I do not take it to indicate that the earlier more reductive processes were redundant. The whole must be understood independently of the parts, but it may be necessary to look at the subsidiary wholes in order to understand anything at all.

Bristol

This was a homecoming. I spent five years working in the community sector in Bristol, and no-one there was more than one remove away from me. In addition to the

benefits that this brought, shared experience brought common illustrations which allowed subtleties to be readily made apparent.

By now the paradigm was like second nature to me, and I found that comments were almost exclusively developments of the idea rather than amendments to my portrayal. At last I felt easy in explaining the issue of asymmetry between the dynamics. Even Simon, with whom I have been arguing about any and everything for fifteen years, could only raise a debate by perpetuating our disagreement about the extent to which leadership is necessary (his position) and the extent to which it inhibits growth in others (mine). This made me happy. The paradigm doesn't seek to resolve this variable equilibrium, only to acknowledge that it exists. Puritanism in co-operatives leads to many problems; excessive pragmatism leads to degeneration. The proper balance is negotiable, with the equity of the negotiations not accessible to objective determination.

So has the paradigm been legitimated?

I believe so, within the epistemic constraints and limitations of the resources that were available; but a second question seems to be called for. Has the paradigm become merely a trivial bundle of irresolute platitudes?

I think not. The acceptance that we have no certain anchor for our beliefs or prescriptions is in itself important; and I believe that, beyond this, the paradigm is a flexible tool for analysis. More will be said of that in the introduction. Before that,

however, a more personal report of the field work will be offered - the first stage of legitimization of a new cycle of the research.

There has been a temptation to make it tidy. Intellectual curiosity pushes me in that direction, and advisors seem enamoured of neatly rounded theses. If the process is to be understood, however, it seems more appropriate to leave the confusion exposed; and no one has described it better than Nicolas Freeling:

Perhaps he had spent his days looking at things which interested him, very closely and carefully, storing himself up to the brim, soaking himself to saturation.....Later on he would distil, but first came the process of fermentation, during which the impurities and irrelevancies scummed up and heaved and turned into the thick crust of rubbish that the winegrowers call 'the hat', while sediment sank, and the turbid unattractive liquid clarified, and the sugar got lighter and grew wings as it turned into the alcohol..... [Freeling,1967:136]

14. Further thoughts of the participants

Problems of conceptual intervention

Trajectories

Each of the participants knew of my belief that, if the way we see the world influences our behaviour, conceptual change may be an effective form of intervention. Many people had comments to make on this issue, or experiences which formed my understanding.

Rajagopalan, a professor at the Indian Institute of Technology in Madras, for example, was concerned at the way in which technologies exported to India failed to take account of the historical trajectory of the society. In the context of this research, the problem might be expressed as one of dissonance within changing individuals, or

between them and their social environment. A response that may be worthy of consideration is that change will always produce conflicts; the questions are how the costs of rearrangement balance against the benefits, and for whom. For example, one may identify, on the one hand, the hope that open markets will lead to open politics, and on the other, that open markets tend to benefit a *comprador* class very disproportionately [Freedland, 1995: Frank, 1978].

Historical determinism is, however, clearly not the message here. Within a variety of constraints, we can choose to vary our social trajectories; and, given the interconnectedness of the world we cannot avoid interference. The trajectory is never entirely local. The part may not be able to operate through substantially different dynamics to the whole.

A colleague of Rajagopalan, a historian, drew attention to the way in which international structures constrain or shape local development. In India, the feudalism of the caste system was replaced by exploitation by the British Raj, through military force, political manipulation, and industrial power. This has since been replaced by the effects of the conditionality rules of the IMF and the World Bank, and the cartel of the G7 group of countries. The global market does not only reinforce international disparities, it imposes coercive structures on less developed economies which may not accord with their preferred trajectory. Is this the constraint we wish to impose?

Krishna illustrates some of these issues rather well. He worked at the guest house in Khatmandu, but his duties left him lots of time for sitting on the roof talking about this and that. With the Nepalese elections coming up, there was lots to talk about.

He is of the chettri caste; petit bourgeois, roughly speaking. His family have a small farm in the hills. He supports the panchayat party, which seeks to perpetuate the hierarchical system of councils topped by the king and his ministers. He sees this as a grass-roots co-operative structure, but understands why I tend to see it as coercive. Nepal is not Europe. Stability is needed, and the rate and mode of change must be decided on local circumstances. As for the free market ethic, he sees that as dangerously destabilising, since it withdraws the responsibility of care for the unfortunate that is explicit to his culture. He is doubtful about the communists, however, even though he believes that redistributive taxation for health and education is a good idea. Essentially, I reckon that his traditionalism has elements of 'god made them high or lowly, and ordered their estate'; but although this doesn't quite match my idea of the division of opportunity, Krishna's ethic of gradual development of participative capacity strikes me as a sane response to Nepal's circumstances.

Two points arise from this. Firstly, that change in Nepal has been motivated by international pressures. Secondly, that the importation of alien political cultures may be uncomfortable; and, I would argue, a paradigmatic intervention, focussing on social dynamics rather than reified practices and structures, may well be of more use. They certainly seemed to contribute to the discussion between Krishna and myself.

The experiences of Periaswamy, an ex-registrar of co-operatives, indirectly supported this view. I met him in Pondicherry, an independent state of a few square miles, with a defiantly French tradition and an extraordinary resemblance to Brighton.

My notes refer to his enthusiasm, and his belief in the Gandhi/Nehru tradition. One could hardly challenge his statistical authority on the restructuring of wealth and opportunity brought about by this ideology. He argued that the practice of co-

operation, developed through economic mutual aid, is a prime factor in the evolution of society. Soft boundaries allow people to be assimilated into the movement, and the ideal of each person having an equitable share in the governance of society will emerge from the experience of success and coalescence of local co-operatives.

This might appear to invert my priorities. Successful practice leads people to change their minds; and I happily agree that change through intellectual conviction, or conceptual intervention, may never be an adequate way of producing a paradigm shift. However, following Develtere's [1993] argument that the colonial imposition of co-operative mechanisms had, in general, failed, the success of the Indian co-operative movement may be attributed to the indigenous cultural changes of the late 1940s. Unless there is an ideology creating spaces for the practice, social innovation will often be smothered in a hostile environment. Without Gandhi's vision, Nehruvian economics would have had no political base. Practice may endorse theory, but innovative practice is dependent on changes in conception.

Support for the use of paradigms (rather than more traditionally structured information) as a means of conceptual change comes from the experiences of Sameer, a Nepali, and Jan, a Dutchman working for the Netherlands development agency SNV. I met both at the University of East Anglia, where we all read Development Studies, and they are now both employed in Kathmandu. Each is committed to evolution towards self-management, but sceptical about the transfer of specific technologies. Paradigms, however, may offer support to local traditions by exposing similarities to successful projects in other environments without seeking to introduce inappropriate social structures; or they may stimulate more radical innovation. Either way they are a minimally coercive form of intervention.

From the point of view of Nepal, presentation of the co-operative paradigm would build on tradition. Until the political reforms of 1951, fruit, flowers, and water were all common property resources; and irrigation and temples were cared for by local associations. Building on this tradition is easier if there is a rationale for doing so, and successful projects seem to be combine ideas that are familiar to the stakeholders with a coherent, supportive, but non-prescriptive philosophy.

One project in the hills around Kathmandu which had claimed the admiration of both Sameer and Jan, has been reported thus:

The collective benefits of bonus savings coupled with a transparency in daily operations have inspired goodwill and an eagerness in the remaining six wards to improve upon and expand these ventures. As the number of Tamang [*lower caste*] workers in these dairies grows, new opportunities open for their families. These openings have offered male farmers new responsibilities and experience, greater mobility and access, exposure to external linkages and heightened levels of camaraderie between the Brahmin and Tamang communities. Indeed, the dairies have become pivotal meeting places at the day's end, where men pursue lengthy discussions on local and national issues.....[*nevertheless, gambling and drunkenness have increased and*] more girls are dropping out of school to assume livestock responsibilities. [Bhatt, *et al*, 1994:28,33]

From the last sentence it may have become apparent that gender issues are significant, and the difficulties of influencing ideologies in some such areas will be discussed in a while. Nevertheless, from my discussions with the principal motivator of

the scheme, I believe that an essentially paradigmatic approach was used. The principle may have been imported but the practice was of local origin.

Both Jan and Sameer were, in general, somewhat cynical about the claims of projects where structures had been changed without changes in understanding. The powerful simply remain powerful in a different context. A neat illustration of this point: women are often co-opted onto committees, not so their voices may be heard, but so that they will act as a channel of communication to those who will have to implement the decisions.

One may infer that promoting co-operative ideas as a form of conceptual intervention is ethically acceptable; encouragement came from *inter alia* an English painter, an economist and a nuclear scientist from Kerala, a management consultant from Cape Town, and a pastrycook from Brighton.

As the pastrycook pointed out, the idea that the behaviour arising from free market ideology is rational depends on a specific understanding of rationality, using as his example the idea that the scarcity of many resources was a consequence of attitudes towards consumption. How do we get people to think differently?

The management consultant, unsurprisingly, is already deeply embroiled in conceptual interventions. Amongst her notions were these:

complexity requires self-organisation, possibly through shared vision
creative thinking can transform apparent conflicts of interest into win/win
opportunities [cf. Fisher and Ury, 1982:\$4]
don't think I, think We.

Our perspective was shared by Dr Paramaswaran, who was worth the three days travel it took to meet him. Trained as a nuclear engineer in Moscow, he then worked for the Atomic Energy Authority in Bombay for a number of years, before dedicating himself to KSSP (similar to the Workers Education Association of the UK); a national literacy scheme with 3 million volunteer teachers; and the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India (Marxist)]. He describes himself as a Marxist-Hindu philosopher, and was happy to see me as an ally in the ideological counter-offensive. (He's gloriously rhetorical, and got me talking like that too.)

The economist and the painter were less specific, but eager for co-operation to be expressed as a rational form of social organisation. Non-coercive persuasion making allowance for existing social trajectories seems to be agreed; but obviously wherever such an influence is intended, an understanding of existing ideologies and of their flexibility is an important factor.

Other people's ideologies

The Hindu tradition appears to be highly accessible. A generally reliable reference book [Flew *et al*, 1979:148] suggests that it is definable neither as a religion, nor as a philosophy. This impression tends to be confirmed by Shanta Lall Mulmi who comfortably professes a Hindu faith which is nothing like the sectarianism of Shiv Shena or the BJP. He runs a health education NGO, the aims of which are to disseminate healthy practices to the villages, and to return information to the Department of Health; even though the aforementioned department apparently consists of two chairs and a table with a broken leg. Interestingly, Mulmi's organisation uses Hindu texts such as the Mahabharata as a medium for primary health care education. Narrative paradigms, or parables, can have more appeal than more abstract models.

He was very sympathetic to the co-operative paradigm, which we went into in depth.

Quoting from my notes:

Authority, for him, is vested in the people and expressed through networking and the sharing of information. The establishment is not that keen on information being shared - viz: the drug information network, on which it wants to keep its paws - and it is difficult to bring about change. Political transformation is not always swiftly followed by social change. The honcho in each village remains the honcho, though the health worker inevitably, if gradually, subverts the hierarchy and reminds the Nepalese of their rich tradition of mutual aid.

Mulmi is devoted to the idea of participatory democracy, reinforced by religious beliefs which express the principle of mutual respect. When Krisna said "I am the universe", he was expressing the unity of life. How does this reflect on market ideology? Perhaps the self-obsessed pursuit of wealth derives from fear, in a country in which there is no NHS, no pension, no guarantee of a dignified old age. The lack of mutual insurance is a vicious spiral, which Mulmi is trying to reverse.

in his interpretation, then, the Hindu tradition is accommodative. Paradigmatic tools from other contexts are welcome not as a transformation of Hindu beliefs, but as a contribution to their development and synthesis with other beliefs. Islam, however, appears to be a different kettle of fish.

Mobin is a senior aid worker in Dhaka. He agreed with me that Islam and feudalism help to reproduce coercion in Bangladesh, though to Mobin, and to others, this is a distortion of Islam. Having read the Koran in translation I can see his point of view. Nevertheless, although Bangladesh is not constitutionally an Islamic state, the inter-

locking of interests of clergy and landowners forms a powerful coalition. In Bangladesh the solidarity is involuntary for many people; conscription, rather than participation. Mobin would like to see a sense of national identity emerge, and to emerge through participative cultural development rather than one of the many forms of jingoism.

Mobin sees Islam, then, as potentially creative, and the co-operative paradigm as consistent with his understanding of it. He rather reminds me, in retrospect, of Sharma from Ilam, whom we will meet later. To one, Islam expresses the idea of mutual responsibility, to the other, Hinduism. Neither is persuaded that the wholesale adoption of Western values would be a benefit; but finding shared understandings could advance us severally and together.

Traditional structures are however very resilient. Where alternative modes of organisation are not supported by ideological evolution, success can be curtailed. As an example, consider the Christian church in south India.

Tangam describes herself as a bachelor girl. She helps to co-ordinate three canteens at local educational institutes for SEWA [the self-employed women's association], and is also a field worker. The centrality of procedural co-operation is inherent to the ethic of her work, but since it is predominantly with women, it was interesting to note that she saw religion and caste rather than gender as the greatest obstruction to its development.

Tangam took me round Marianad, where she was brought up, and where she owns a home. It was founded by the local Catholic Bishop, who established a housing co-op there. When it became apparent that the fishermen were being exploited by the entrepreneurs, co-operative fishing and marketing was introduced. Success led to

assimilation by competing politicians from both the Congress and Communist parties, and on the death of the Bishop, the church hierarchy seems to have attempted to revoke his libertarian influence; since then the village has been suspended between the quasi-co-operative form and the increasing pressures of a liberalised market. One enlightened bishop doth not a summer make.

I learned more of the problems from John Kurien, an international socio-piscatologist who was involved in the formation of the fishing co-ops, and of the federation of allied co-ops building boats, and other activities. Market liberalisation has been very threatening. Traditionally, as Bose confirms [Bose, 1984], common property resources were to some extent allocated according to caste, on the principal of the division of labour. Sustainability was thus built into the system, given the loyalty to the family that is part of the Indian tradition. Now high technology has much the same effects as it has in the North and Irish Seas; depletion of stocks, bankruptcy of fishers, ownership of fleets shifting to extra-territorial corporations. The market does not ask many questions about the consequences of technological change, which can viciously constrain opportunities for those who become ex-stakeholders. (Gerald Midgley would probably say, "hence the need for systemicity and criticality in assessing improvement", with which I might find myself quibbling rather than arguing.)

John was always very keen on letting go, but appears resentful of the degeneration of that which he helped to create. If there is a summary of his response, it may be the value of conscientisation over politicisation. On my notebook cover is the emphatic slogan *not structure, not procedure, but attitude*. The attitude of the Church establishment did not change. There was merely a minor perturbation in the extension of its authority. (Dr Thomas of Palai had something to say on this subject as well.)

While running through the faiths, I could hardly omit Buddhism. Niraj, a young fax office manager in Kathmandu, was very happy to connect the co-operative paradigm to the Buddhist Tao. Indeed, my notes say that he could have been quoting from my papers. Lust leads to aggression and stress. We should seek to understand with other men and women how our needs can be met. Coercion is only permissible if defensive and reformatory. What of those who suffer misfortune? They must be helped if they really cannot help themselves, but each of us is responsible for our own salvation. Only through the path of right livelihood can we transcend our bodily manifestation. Nor can we coerce others into supporting the poor; voluntarily, or not at all. Honest dealing always; and first you must understand the person, holistically.

Niraj lived in Bangladesh for three years, and, as a Buddhist, felt uncomfortable with the doctrinaire Islamic environment; so if Allah tells them they are right, who tells you you are right? It's a matter of social evolution, he says, and I tend to agree. Buddhism has been a 2,500 year stream of moral and political discourse. Isn't it brilliant that after only 25 years of adult life I've managed to duplicate some of its teachings?

I should perhaps mention that non-religious ideologies will be explored later; but on the Indian sub-continent, from which my examples have so far been taken, theism is as prevalent as is materialism in southern California.

Bending ideologies - the case of gender

The possibility of conceptual change preceding structural change are evident, one might argue, in the instance of gender in the western world. Indira Koirala, inspiration for the dairy project discussed a little earlier, spoke with me about gender and

procedural co-operation, and in doing so helped to relate the ideas of conceptual and structural change within an existing trajectory.

Her recipe is gradualism, loads of encouragement, social space, and time to listen and grow. Hear your own voice, listen to that of others. Conceptual intervention is the tool, but ethnicity and cultural traditions are significant variables. The Tamang women traditionally have more to say in the home than do the wives of Brahmins. Property rights, consumption entitlements, and investment in health and education carry heavy gender biases [Elson, 1992]. The patriarchal traditions of the Brahmins may have reinforced these traditions when they moved into the valley, but they also introduced ideas of entrepreneurship and innovation. The weaving together of disparate ideas is dependent on understanding, which is where paradigms may come in.

I asked Indira about the role of the market and leadership, and found that talking in paradigmatic terms provided a common ground on which to set out our disparate experiences. Of the market - yes, as a tool, contained within the idea of community: of leadership - women from various castes were being selected as treasurers and secretaries to local groups on the grounds of their competence, and definitely leadership is constructed, by her Institute for Integrated Development Studies, as a facilitative role within a forum. Shared understanding without the transfer of alien technologies?

Indira's gradualism contrasted amusingly with the more charismatic approach of Mrs Ram Devi Shrestha, regional organiser in Ilam for a Nepali women's organisation. She'd been away organising, and her home was organised and her daughters were upfront and educated, and when one of them translated for me, Mrs Shrestha seemed

rather surprised that anyone might not share the co-operative paradigm. Coercion and market contained by social construction, OK.

So what of gender coercion? Indira Koirala's point had been that when men consulted women about getting another buffalo, it would be the buff's health with which he'd be concerned. Mrs Shrestha sailed past such difficulties simply because participation is so self-evidently the only way to make full use of people's talents and commitments that men are bound to come round. Confidence is the key factor and a belief in the righteousness of women having a voice. Cultural change again seen as the key, even if the approach is rather different to Indira's.

Rao, a lecturer at the Co-operative College in south India, was less sanguine. We spoke a lot about what I'd been doing, and he helped me contextualise many of my more ravelled experiences. His work at the Institute of Co-operative Management concerns extending the milk co-operative tradition into the women-only sector. One aspect of this reflects again the social context of the market, and of the need to work towards procedural co-operation, rather than to limit ourselves to calculative short term group advantages. Simply, when a womens' milk co-operative becomes successful, it's very difficult to stop the males in their families from intruding; and it is also virtually impossible to ensure that husbands do not expropriate the profits once they have been distributed to the women members. Structural change without cultural change?

Ideologies which endorse male domination need not, of course, be predominantly religious. It is hard not to see Islam as fundamentally opposed to gender equity.

Nevertheless, Tasnim and Naila are two women working in development in Dhaka who see Islam more as a cultural tradition than an exposition of the word of an omnipotent, omniscient and eternal being. The coercive aspect of Islam is a regional cultural tradition imposed on a religion; vested interests use the authority of religion to enhance their own privileges.

I found this interesting; that two educated urban Bangladeshi women should see Islam more closely as I would like to see it, as one mode of expression of mutual concern and responsibility. Perhaps I should also emphasise that Islam is more tolerant of other beliefs than the stereotype that is popular in the West acknowledges. Richard the Lionheart must have looked mighty like an invader from outer space to the average Saracen, and many of our images have been formed by heroic tales of the Crusades.

On gender, both Tasnim and Naila were quite clear that change was taking place, and that the middle-class evolution of women's roles would eventually be translated as consistent with the Koran and the writings of the Prophet. After all, his wife was very influential in the presentation of his life as a model of behaviour. Neither is entirely persuaded that Mohamet could have foreseen all the circumstances of modern life, so that the protection of women seems anachronistic in many ways. Neither, however, felt that the Koran is as inflexible as a Muslim zealot; and they expect to bring up their children in the faith, though reflecting their own understanding of it. It is important, they agree, not to confuse the rituals of a religion with its inner significance. That they are in a position to express beliefs such as this, however, is in part due to their comparatively liberated family backgrounds, in part education, and in part because they work for a British aid organisation that is committed to offering opportunities to Bangladeshi women.

A dignified contrast was provided by Rafi, a liberal Moslem working at a Christian college in Kerala. There are similarities between his view and those of Tasnim and Naila. indeed, none of the Muslims with whom I spoke doubted that the Koran requires interpretation, nor that the prophet intended that interpretation to be a matter of individual conscience, though guided by respect for those who were dedicated to its study. There are Muslims who think otherwise, of course, but they weren't the sort to start chatting with you at a station *chai* stall. Rafi, on the other hand, was.

He is a biochemist, a loving husband and caring father. As far as he is concerned, the Koran belongs to everyone, not to the gatekeepers. If one were to seek to encapsulate its message it would be brotherhood and social justice. Rafi attended the World Islamic Congress in Tamil Nadu, where 14 lakh [1.4 million] participants needed no policing. Conformity to the Koran is a liberation, since through it we can come to understand the natural harmony of the universe. This, crucially, includes the natural dependence of women on men, and men's responsibility towards them. To Rafi respect means something different in the context of gender than it does to me; but I have rarely seen a woman who appears happier than his wife, and she is a well-qualified linguist who could have a career. How could I accuse her of false consciousness for choosing to serve and obey her husband when they lead a happy useful dignified life?

Rafi's opinion was echoed by the unmarried Farooq. He would be happy for his wife to work if she wanted to and had the better job - but being Muslim she would not want to. Women are weaker, men must protect them.

A gender equality paradigm would not find a responsive audience among all Moslems, then. A conceptual shift must perhaps be gradual, as Indira suggested. This is another reason to use paradigms pragmatically rather than theories didactically. Paradigms do not pretend to mirror the truth, and can be so sub-divided that rejection of one aspect need not include rejection of others; it's easy to agree to differ. By contrast, White's suggestion that Bangladeshi feminists should take the role of practical joker, aggravating the patriarchy, then leaping nimbly back before they can respond, was widely treated as risible; a classic instance of inappropriate transfer of social technology [White, 1992]. In Manhattan such a pose might get you a TV contract. In Bangladesh it's more likely to get you beaten or stoned.

Not that there are not shared views between east and west on gender issues at the paradigmatic level. Mary, a medical practitioner I met at a conference in California, and Gita Sen, a professor at the Indian Institute of Management, independently saw gender attitudes as being particularly pervasive and hard to transform since they form a concealed ontology for so many of our social structures. Gita Sen proposed that men had traditionally been trained for the market, women for negotiation and compromise. Mary argued that the greed and fear which motivate both market and coercive ideologies are typical of the masculine discourse. Widespread gender equity may be dependent, then, on transforming the mode of social organisation.

This idea was also reflected in my conversation with Debora, a lecturer at Berkeley. She wrote that

there is a growing consensus that the atomistic conception of individualism, along with the Newtonian worldview from which it is derived, has contributed substantially to the entropy of environmental destruction and social disintegration.....Far from subordinating the

individual to the whole, most of the systems views we have examined emphasise the importance of participation and involvement. However, in contrast to the atomistic and competitive conception of individualism, which promotes separateness and isolation, the systems view of the individual is primarily concerned with relationship. Hierarchical and exclusionary forms of social organisation result from a fearful and defensive conception of individual autonomy.....more co-operative forms of social organisation could be fostered by an understanding of the integral connection between the welfare of the individual and the welfare of the social and environmental context within which s/he exists. Not only do we need to break down the defensive isolation of the self, we need to learn how to create contexts that foster the interconnected and interdependent aspects of our increasingly fragmented selves.

I love that to bits, but does all this seem very Californian? Is all this talk simply utopian day-dreaming? I think not. Whether people can work from principle to personal change or not is a contested issue. [Goldstein, 1981; Honey and Mumford, 1992] Nevertheless even imitation, a practical form of learning, depends on the capacity to imagine oneself other, and if that is not conceptual development, I don't know what is. Whether a paradigm is better expressed as a parable or a model may vary; and the question of whether a paradigmatic conceptual intervention is unequivocally distinct from proselytising dogma has yet to be resolved.

Dogma

Several times I was presented with variations on Shaw's comment that revolutions change nothing but the name of the oppressor. Am I simply seeking to replace one tyranny with another?

The senior member of the Brighton food co-op emphasised that, although he sympathised with the rationale I was putting forward, there is no single solution, and that ideas must evolve alongside social practice. I don't think I had disagreed before. Nevertheless, I probably tended to emphasise the transience and undogmatic nature of the co-operative paradigm thereafter. Any paradigm, in my conception of the role of the social scientist, is a tool. Familiarisation, even with a relatively straightforward paradigm, may initially require a fairly uncritical acceptance, but this is only a prelude to the rigorous testing that is recommended if there is any chance that the paradigm is to be adopted. As Tomy Cherian, a fiery young teacher of English in Kerala, said: the locus of power may shift, but power is very rarely dispersed; and an education system which discourages asking questions and challenging opinions may contribute little to equity in the construction of social institutions. At that simple level, the aim of the co-operative option may appear unequivocal; to encourage open debate. In practical terms, of course, co-operation is not always so simple.

Another Brighton wholefood worker, with a degree in social administration (and two children), suggested that accepting procedural co-operation as a principle does not mean that consensus is always attainable. While those who are opposed to any negotiation may have to be coerced, genuine disagreements may be inescapable, and majority rule may have to prevail: the ability to accept wholeheartedly decisions which differ from those you might have taken requires a maturity which is not always evident. The difficulties of consensual working were raised by others, here and elsewhere. "Two cheers for democracy" [Forster, 1972] summed up the attitude of the longest serving member of this co-operative. At the time I was attempting to specify the criteria of Ideal speech; I stopped.

Perhaps, however, the principal influence in this respect was Tess. She is the daughter of a carpenter, the grand-daughter of the first communist in Uppsala, and contributed a range of subtleties to my understanding. She persuaded me that my criteria for ideal speech - concern, consent, holism and listening - should be subordinated to the simple generalisation that those who are affected by a decision should be fairly represented in its formation. She also stressed the importance of distinguishing between the spiritual and the religious, and of joy rather than duty as the mainspring of mutuality. (Maybe I should set her onto Etzioni.)

An English academic also encouraged me to shy away from any attempt to define ideal speech. She pointed out the persistent problem that if the guidelines are designed and owned by insiders, the discourse is always controlled by them: they retain the rights to approve or disapprove of processes, since they are the ones who are supposed to understand the issue. The important point is that equitable discourse is understood as a principle; in which respect, Habermas' *pure intersubjectivity* isn't a bad formulation [Habermas, 1970]. The mode of expression, however, will depend on the circumstances, and, to take in an earlier point, the historical trajectory.

This recognition would seem to support the skeletal simplicity of paradigms, as was evident in another instance. Alex comes from British Columbia and also influenced my thinking on the mode of presentation of ideas. He is young, with wealthy parents, and is experimenting with alternatives to their perspective on life. Learning is important to him; he was disappointed not to see it described as a need, but accepted creativity and play as evidence of good intent. His response was, however, a nudge in the direction of abandoning the specificity of Mallman's seven part taxonomy of needs. A shift of focus from detail in the parts to the shape of the whole emerged as a trend in

my presentation, then, both for needs and for ideal speech; an avoidance of dogma through seeking to strip away cultural impedimenta.

Nevertheless, we cannot simply assume that everyone wants to live with the buzzing, blooming confusion of continual reconstruction. Another of the Brightonian wholefood workers led me to believe that some paradigm of ideal speech might be welcome after all. She suggested that we need rules, even if they should be a matter of understanding rather than verbal quibbling, and equitably constructed. "Dealing with people," she remarked, "is the most crucial and difficult skill, so structure can be helpful; but a caring attitude is most essential." Attitude is preferable to rules, then, but rules may be helpful; how do you develop the preferred attitudes without transmitting some message? and if you do, what and how?

Attitude not rules

Two workers producing co-operative Tofu in Oregon had thought a lot about the process. From one of them came an emphasis on security as a pre-condition as well as a consequence of co-operation, to be pursued by being "committed to understanding and respecting each other, not being afraid to say what you really mean, and taking each other seriously;" with the codicil that collective working can allow people to push through their plans and then evade responsibility for them. From the other came support for the significance of fourth level co-operation, linked to the notion that we need "to feel that one's life is significant beyond itself."

6,000 miles away, Sarah works at a city farm in Bristol that has just transformed itself into a co-operative. She puts a lot of weight on people learning how to get the most

from meetings, and I'm sure she's right. The core skill, she suggests, is creative listening. She also echoed Bosse, a Swedish journalist, with the idea that the identification of a cultural hegemony can be misleading. He had pointed out, subtly, that many people profess free market irresponsibility while contributing voluntarily to community welfare. This cognitive dissonance could be exploited to let them see their ideologies in a different light. Not surprisingly, Bosse is a journalist, just come from setting up local radio in Estonia. Sarah confirmed that there is a lot of dissonance about. Even though the cartoons her daughter watches emerge from a capitalist system, the greedy are often portrayed as stupid and ugly. In a complex world are simple messages always deceitful?

Another Jane was next on the list. She and Andy and I worked the green movement together for some time, and they still do. I would like to think that my work could contribute to what they're doing. It's certainly intended to do so, though this present project may take a long time, and may be a failure in its immediate form. We all know about that. You prod and try, suck it and see, and when an opportunity arises, you all pile in through the breach in the establishment's walls. Both Andy and Jane have taught me about infinite patience, and Andy taught me street theatre too, which is very useful at academic conferences. We used it for agit-prop in the green cause, and to some extent the communication of the argument may depend on such techniques. You mustn't try to fool people, but nor is it appropriate to confuse tedium with worthiness. The message Jane would always like to reinforce is the importance of trust in building any social institution.

I couldn't help but trust Lief, my ageing Oregonian farm commune hippie companion. In his role as security guard at the Fourth of July party he dealt with any attempts to subvert the event by finding you a beer or giving you a hug. If you felt insecure, you

went to him. To report our conversation on top of the farm canteen at the fair in academic terms would be faintly ludicrous. Two well-matured and well-stoned musical carpenter hippies celebrating trees, life and music on a summer's day speak in shorthand. Some of the more accessible understandings that emerged were these.

"All there is is one spirit of life, and what happens inhibits or furthers life. Community is life enhancing. Spiritual needs are fundamental. Attitude rather than intellect leads to righteous behaviour.....Change is necessary but as Frank Herbert said "Language cuts the grooves in which our thoughts must run;" to change our thoughts we must change our language.....Pain is a fierce ally..... membership must be clear, responsibilities must be accepted, apprenticeship may be necessary.....it maybe looks like the ship is sinking. Some will weep, some will grab, but we're trying to go down with honour, and, who knows? There's a chance we'll save the ship..."

As for my role, as someone trying to express a way forward using the language of the old grooves, Lief enjoyed the vision of me jumping up and down and waving a flag and, in the tradition of Suggsy's declaration, advising the world: "Don't look there, look here! This is the heavy, heavy monster sound....Monsters....ROLL!" Like I say, two old hippies.....

Yet is that so silly? A far more serious conversation took place with a Danish visitor to the commune, himself from a Christian community in Denmark. He was troubled in his spirit and his mind, and though we seemed to share many ideas, the feeling of community kept slipping away. Back home they find they have to move so far up the chain; if they want organic fertiliser they have to have a herd of cows; if they want a herd of cows.... He works as an environmental noise scientist, and contributes a lot of capital to the community when he's there. I couldn't help feeling that it's easier for

those of us who feel that if there is godliness it is in all of us, rather than in an external entity. Nor am I sure that my view of co-operation can live with strong religious convictions, which attribute omniscience to a god, and, all too frequently for my tastes, to the priesthood thereof. He was also evasive, and could neither disagree with nor endorse my model. Something was nagging him, and the commune farmers have a point. It is not by intellectual conviction, in the end, that a new world will come about, but through learning to love each other and ourselves. Was the melancholy Dane strung up by the attempt to reconcile dissonant rules which are incompatible, or am I imposing a Hamlet persona too glibly on him?

Which takes us back to the structure vs attitude conundrum. If rules - whether God's or ours - carve grooves in which we run, can we create social forms, or should we seek to develop our capacity to construct off the cuff, on the run, from a deeper understanding? (Kohlberg's post conventional morality comes into its own again. [Kohlberg, 1981])

This stuff is right up Subbu's street. He had just completed a PhD at the LSE and was returning to take up a post as leader writer on *The Hindu*, a respected national newspaper. His interests coincided with mine, and we talked political philosophy for hours on a train, and in cafes and in his brother's home in south Madras. The point of agreement was the outline of the paradigm; the points of contention concerned the philosophy of procedural co-operation.

Subbu's argument, following Rawls to some extent, is that the state must be neutral between conceptions of the good. A successful social contract is that which balances the interests of sectoral interests within the state - "social arrangements to minimise conflict", as he said. Looking back a year or so later, I recognise the similarities

between Siva and Subbu's outlook, and perhaps grasp one of the points Alan has been nagging me about.

I recognise individuals and individuals interacting, but pay little attention to formalised groups. This, I would suggest, is because I am discussing a way of acting and constructing in which it is assumed that all people are *ipso facto* morally relevant. Co-operation is fluid, to my mind, while traditional ideologies may have tended to emphasise structure and boundary maintenance rather than process. [Subbu goes for structure as the manifestation of procedural co-operation; I go for process, or, better still, attitude.]

Of course, there is the possibility that most ideologies start as images of modes of behaviour and become stultified once they become manifest in organisations and political structures. The Indian co-operative movement sometimes strikes one like that.

One way in which messages become ossified is when the word of a leader becomes sacrosanct. This is one of the problems I have with Gramsci, whom I suspect of having inspired Dick, an old school socialist from the valleys, and a colleague of mine in the recycling trade. According to Gramsci, we need an intellectual elite to overthrow the cultural hegemony [Joll, 1977], so that the people can lead themselves to the promised land. Fair enough, I suppose; but do not the words of leaders become sacrosanct beyond their time and place? Islam comes to mind again.

A traditionalism that appears to be induced by Islam is very noticeable at times. I visited a kitchen garden project out in the sticks, where a young man was having a huge success; but when the family from whom he leased the land were asked why

they didn't follow suit, the answer was that they were rice farmers. That's it; what you are is what you stay.

Ahmed Farooq came from the same area. I went with friends up to an island village in north west Bangladesh - an island amidst sea during the floods, and fields at other times - for the new year, and Farooq was an educational project supervisor. We spoke quite a lot about Shakespeare, and quite a lot about co-operation, sitting in a garden by candlelight, watching people crossing a stream on a bamboo bridge.

He was supportive of the paradigm, but his strong Islamic faith conspired with my scepticism to lead to some friendly dissonance. To recall one of his comments; he would be happy for his wife to work if she wanted to and had the better job - but being Muslim she would not want to. Women are weaker, men must protect them. Usury we could agree on; you earn by working, not by owning. Negotiation is an interesting issue; he is bounded by definitive constraints, I am bounded by my commitments, which are at least superficially more adaptable. Holistic welfare is shared, but the motives are different; he wishes to obey the explicit instructions of a benevolent god, I go for empathy. Nevertheless, his personified God represents the transcendence of incorporation and ego, and we also agreed that if you perceive something as beautiful but bad, or good but ugly, you have some sorting to do - the Ahmed-Brauer-Kawamura Theory of Aesthetic and Ethical Harmonisation. (Kawamura was a fellow student of mine studying philosophy, who introduced me to a variety of Japanese conceptions.)

Perhaps the most crucial point of variance between Farooq and myself was that he favoured charismatic leadership, consensually supported, whereas my view of procedural co-operation lays a lot more emphasis on participation. The point at which leadership becomes oppressive or non-adaptive is not always easy to discern; but

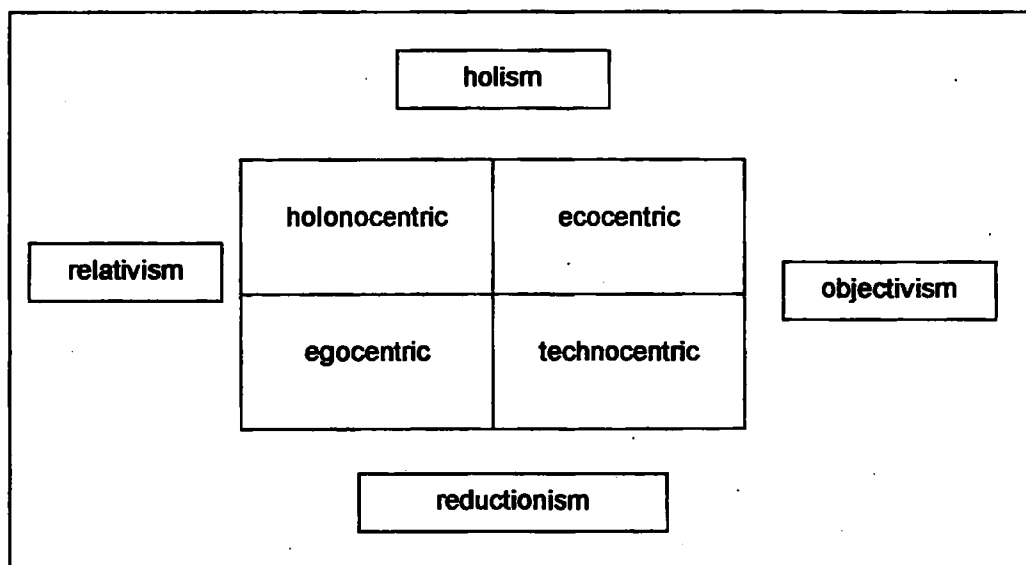
essentially I think that as circumstances change rules have to be adapted if their original intention is to be fulfilled. The influence of leadership can be perpetuated past its healthy shelf life.

Consider the international commune at Auroville. My notes begin: 'Aurobindo sprouted the Mother, the Mother the Ashram, the Ashram Auroville...' Aurobindo was a guru. The Mother was an acolyte and organiser, who built the ashram, which is a place of beauty and holy calm. Auroville was born out of the ashram as an international commune, on land donated by the state. There is a tradition of stress, because the ashram seniors still want to run the commune, but the commune believes it now owns itself. Germaine Greer got into a tussle with Suzanne Moore in *The Guardian* because having paid her dues, she felt that Moore was not showing the respect that was appropriate. One of the moot points of life is the question of when an apprenticeship becomes a sharing, or when the acolyte has superseded their sponsor.

Problems of leadership and proscription, then, are not peculiar to authoritarian religions. All the same, much can be learned from that context, and juxtaposing Catholicism and Islam is interesting. My friends Marla and Paul, aid workers in Bangladesh, are Catholics, so that the question of the coerciveness of religions such as theirs and that of the Muslims became an unresolved area of debate and speculation.

Paul talked quite a bit about 'the self-reinforcing process of dogmatism in the social and psychological realms'. I'm not sure I'd use the same terminology, but I can see what he means. A culture may encourage a style of opinion-holding irrespective of the content. More importance is attached to the strengths of one's beliefs than to the content. Paul might have enjoyed Richard Bawden from Hawkesbury, Oz, leading a

discussion the other day on how to transform people from dogmatism to relativism. A model that he used, illustrated below, suggested a spiral of personal development.



According to Richard Bawden, there is a common evolution starting from egocentricity and developing anti-clockwise. Since it is in some ways a paradigmatic presentation of theories of child development [Piaget, 1969; Erikson, 1977], there is a fair degree of validation. I would argue that the relativism of the egocentric and the holonocentric are rather dissimilar. Egocentricity is not relativistic as an epistemology, since all alien views are simply seen as mistaken. That apart, however, I can imagine the paradigm being a useful context for considering how you move people round the cycle, especially where there are in-built constraints on interpretation of dogma, as is the case in the hierarchy of Catholicism, and the traditionalism of Islam.

Dr Thomas at St Thomas' College in Kerala talked of this with me as we walked the evening hills, for all the world like Father Brown and Flambeau on Hampstead Heath [Chesterton, 1992:20]. He is committed to faith; I to scepticism. The significant

distinction, we agreed, was that faith is only open to endogenous critiques, while scepticism demands a continuous openness to new perspectives and radical shifts in understanding. Dr Thomas saw the stability of faith as an emotional necessity; which is, curiously enough, a pragmatic rationalisation of faith. While it is conceivable that faith will lead to submissiveness to a religious elite, Dr Thomas was clearly more committed to an almost pantheistic, empathic and poetic vision. At some of the meals we shared, we were almost conspiratorial. For him to live in peace in his community, it is as well not to raise the question of the church's response to the collapse of eastern European communism. With one less enemy, one might have thought that discipline could be relaxed; but one might perceive instead a form of triumphalist opportunism. While the devil is on the back foot, that is a good time to reinforce the authority of the church. (Do you recall the fishing community at Marianad?)

I think it would be fair to represent his position by the idea that we must choose faith because we are incapable of handling the unexplained; an attitude which would offer hope and comfort to Flood and Romm's conviction that postmodernism is always gloomy [Flood and Romm, 1995:473]. This is problematic to me, as I have explained, and one of the reasons for my concern can be explained via a colleague of Dr Thomas.

With Father Matthew there were two issues. First of these was whether the Bible should be taken literally, and on this we could agree. He suggested that the Creation could be understood as true in the discourse of the time, but that, essentially, faith is ineffable, and therefore all descriptions of it are to some extent metaphoric. (He's working on a PhD: *Death and Transcendence in the works of Heinrich Boll*.) On the second point we disagreed. He believes that the moral metaphor requires a brahmin caste to translate and interpret it, whereas I see the metaphor as being a construction

in which all can participate. Religious groups which have no clergy suggest that it is possible to see morality as exogenous without brahmins.

Dick the Gramscian might agree with him, on more or less similar grounds. (Marxism and Catholicism often seem to attract people of similar casts of mind.) Dick had an interesting response to the co-operative paradigm. It's populist, he says; but that isn't incompatible with an implicit rigour. Ignorance and alienation make people suckers for capitalism, he says: how do we create conditions in which people not only want to have a voice but insist on it? "I believe in giving people responsibility, but I'm also very demanding. I have no hang ups about power, and I don't suffer fools gladly."

An account of my experiences in an east Nepali village a long day's scramble away from Ilam, may help to construct the tension between an active faith and authoritarianism.

I can't give Soran's real name. He was a Christian missionary at a time when they were banned by royal decree as an unacceptable intervention. Christianity is seen as an alien cultural influence in many parts of the east, and aggressive proselytising is understandably unwelcome. The Nepalese monarchy didn't want its oligopoly upset by an alternative, perhaps, while I'm just against cultural hegemony in any form.

He moved up into the hills ten years ago when the village was three rice-straw huts. Using his own savings he founded a school, around which the village grew into a Himalayan equivalent of a Hampshire village. He wanted to bring Christianity to poor people because he saw the caste system as inequitable, Hinduism as a hindrance to economic development, and the gods as rather arbitrary sadists. In my notes it says

[He] operates by living according to Jesus as best he can, and by living the story and relating the parables, he is not offering others a voice, but a vocabulary. This is not to say he is intolerant of others' voices; simply that he has faith in the voice he has heard, and wants to live his life sharing it.[He] is a pragmatist not a dogmatist.

As a pragmatist, he has a programme, visiting house to house, openly Christian, but more concerned with talking about hygiene and rabbits, using the respect he has gained in the neighbourhood - six teachers now at his school - to gain an ear, but using neither this nor the school as a means of indoctrination. Simply, this is Jesus' story, and it works for me. ... Jesus is full of stories about oxen and asses and grinding corn, the imagery is not anachronistic here - living in harmony with what we have, growing together.

This approach may not be unique, but I think it's effective. Consider one of his converts, whom I met in the market in Ilam. He is a soldier; a bombardier. After 17 years he'll take his pension and go back to work in the village, where his wife and children await him. He'll try to start up a business, but for the general benefit, not dominated by the pursuit of personal gain. Leadership is important, but he is very clear that this is a matter of inspiration not coercion; and pragmatically based. As with his mentor, he believes that if you show through your life how good living can be, and tell the story, others will follow your example.

I can picture him in the cafe where we spoke, excitable, getting his english words confused but never satisfied until I was clear on each point, and then eager to know whether we agreed; not so much intellectual co-generation as shared excitement. In

my opinion, he, and even more particularly his teacher, were involved in cultural intervention in one of the least oppressive styles; offering ideas in a digestible form, as one child of god to another. The Sikkimese missionary, however, was quite odious to me, and a pure process interventionist. He didn't care what people did, as long as they did it within the religious franchise he held from the authorities at the missionary training college run by rich Madras Christians.

We were stuck with each other in a lamp-lit hut because of a thunderstorm. To prove his point he had brought a thirteen year old boy, who recited a dream he had, interpreted by one of the teachers at Soran's school. I could retell the dream in all its lurid glory, but basically he dreamed that Kali was going to carve out his heart, and then a blue-eyed bloke with a blonde beard and a white nightshirt appeared in a golden glow and Kali imploded. For this he was petted and rewarded; and maybe he really did dream it, and maybe like Snobby Price in *Major Barbara*, he just realised that every time you cry out that you've been saved you get a cup of cocoa and a biscuit.

I'm not at all sure how you avoid this; but perhaps what I've said makes it clearer why I'm extremely dubious about the suggestion that imposing process does much more than encourage a few locals to memorise your rule book. Soran offered a process paradigm, through active parables. He didn't tell others how to organise their own communities, yet they profited from that of his which they adopted.

Getting things done

Who first commented on the curious choice of the label *business*? Accomplishment is clearly distinguishable from simply being busy. Soran was busy, but it is for the outcomes that he is worthy of praise.

Sometimes aid agencies fail by this criterion. When I went to UEA, the Development Department presented a lecture to celebrate twenty years of failure. They were quite explicit about that; with the curious post-script that now they had it right. Why we should trust them, I don't know; but governments define academics as clever so that when things go wrong they can say that they had given their money to and sought the advice of the cleverest people; what more could they have done?

I don't think there's much doubt that the use of overseas aid is very mixed in its effects. The Dhaka field director of a major British charity described Bangladesh as a basket case. Before there is an awareness of the possibility or of the need for change, assumptions must be challenged. Those who accept drought as an act of god might do well to ask why they believe it; and, subsequently, what they might do about it. Deforestation, private theft of public resources, and mega-dams in India may be part of god's will, but it might be possible to negotiate with her/him on the issue. So, along with the immediate alleviation of the direst poverty, she believes in education; and so do I, and neither of us means being trained to act as an economic unit.

The Ford Foundation representative was suspicious of ideology, talking a lot about the importance of pragmatism. Since I believe that clarity in ideology is a necessity to pragmatic politics, we were always at odds, not over the paradigm itself, but over the way in which an ideology might be used. My response to this point of view is that we all have ideologies and that it is probably preferable to be aware of them, if only to increase the chances of reconciling them with those of others; and to achieve internal consistency. In the five year plan report of a major indigenous charity supported by the Ford Foundation, it was argued both that in various sectors there is 'imperfect and distorted market operation' which requires correction, and that there is a need to

'correct market imperfection and bias and provide strength to the poor in the markets which become more free.' I don't suppose I need to draw attention to the contradiction inherent in intervention to liberate markets; but I would like to point out that the co-operative paradigm resolves this paradox, and might thereby contribute to a clearer understanding of the policies they seek to promote.

In other respects we were in complete accord. He was very strongly into networks and advocacy; aspects of what I now tend to call the equitable construction of social institutions. This was evident in the charity to which I've just referred, one of whose senior officers I met. He shared the Ford Foundation's concern for effective practice, and in their advocacy programme I found much to admire, even if charisma seemed to take precedence over participation. Since one of the essentials of their programme is to establish contact with sympathisers in groups not traditionally aligned with the social development perspective, there may be good reason to fudge ideological issues. My preference for bringing forward controversial issues and increasing our capacity to handle diversity is only an article of faith; but comparing Argyris and Schon's view of learning organisations [Argyris, 1982], in which such skills are seen as fundamental, with the emollient bureaucracies that prevail in so many inadequate organisations, I am not tempted to change my mind for the present.

Loyalty and coherence, though effective in many respects, can be dangerous. Learning to think for yourself is a pre-requisite of participation; dissonance the adumbration of synthesis. One of the least effective projects I visited, in the Nepali hills, had had a tradition of being fanatically well organised in a hierarchical form. Failure was recognised in the form of a massive reorientation; a failure I would attribute to neglect of cultural, as opposed to structural, change.

Illustrating this perspective was a Gorkha, a supervisor on construction projects, recently joined. He is word perfect in the jargon; consultation, bottom-up initiatives, facing the people, making sure that the poor and the women have a voice, even, gawd help us, dialoguing problems. The people are aware, he says, Communists and Congress working together to promote small-scale accessible business opportunities: income generation through chickens and pigs and rabbits and kitchen gardens, some for consumption, some for exchange.

Why was I so suspicious of him? Was it because his attitude to the local people reminded me of some Germans joking about Schwabians and Saxons. These are dim-witted farmers, lacking vision, initiative and ambition. We Gorkhas are a vigorous people - we may get drunk and throw money around, but we're willing to take risks. We're entrepreneurs and innovators. I think he was just carrying out orders, which happened to instruct him to be participative; but working in a highly structured hierarchy the word had no authentic referent.

A colleague of his is responsible for administration on this project in eastern Nepal, and must have done a superb job under the old project leader. When I ask him to tell me about his work, he talks, I am willing to swear, for an hour without breaks or hesitations, describing the stages and sub-stages prescribed as appropriate for every village project. [Did the Roman army not used to do this? Every camp, everywhere in the world, was laid out the same; come to think of it, is not Macdonald's run on the same principle?]

Despite this, the administrator is eager for change. What worries me slightly is that although he favours, theoretically, self-definition, he does not apply it to himself. We discussed the co-operative paradigm in some detail, and he follows it without difficulty;

and accepts it. I don't believe he'd be equally ready to believe Stalin if he were the next to come in, but it made me terribly aware of a particular problem. Where people are forced into dependency, whether through circumstances or through other people's lust for power, the skill of self-definition atrophies; and as Dave in Bristol pointed out, the first essential of co-operation is a sense of identity, even if the second is transcendence of the ego.

So how will Ton, the new Dutch project director, deal with all this? Pretty well I would have thought. We spent quite a lot of time discussing people-centred development and so on. Of course, no subject exists in isolation, and sometimes it's easier to understand what's going on by looking at the adjoining fields of study. On one side of the MHP is technology; bridges, irrigation. On another, agriculture. Micro-economics. Innovation. Politics. Anthropology. History. What's missing? Philosophy?

Maybe this isn't just paranoia. Maybe that's what is missing. Ton studied with Norman Long, and I'd read *Battlefields of Knowledge*, his recent *magnum opus*, so let me quote from it:

The essence of the actor-oriented approach is that its concepts are grounded in the everyday life experiences and understandings of men and women..... In essence, we are interested in developing theoretically grounded methods of social research that allow for the elucidation of actors' interpretations and strategies, and of how these interlock through processes of negotiation and accommodation. [Long and Long, 1992:5]

This is necessary, he believes, because good policy depends on research, and he has no faith in 'simplistic systems thinking' or 'ethnographic particularism' [*ibid*:4].

How strange this sounds. I can follow what he means, but I can't see how it differs significantly from soft or critical systems or other facilitative interventions. The overall aim is to present

a useful conceptual framework for people to analyse their own life

circumstances and to assess the possible strategies for action. [ibid:272]

Sounds like a process paradigm to me. The people's content, Long's conceptual framework. No intervention is neutral; but if no intervention is neutral, how do we intervene justly?

One's answer is likely to depend on one's ideology, and in that respect Thomas and Lockett's injunction to make one's premises explicit appears reasonable [Thomas and Lockett, 1991:100]. If one follows this line of thought in the context of the co-operative paradigm, the traditional social scientific intervention may appear to be coercive. I have also heard an academic in a development studies department give a lecture in which he proposed that in the aftermath of any Bangladeshi disaster, the victims should simply be given money to make what arrangements they please. The idea that preconditions such as perfect information, protection against deceit and extortion, many suppliers, and free entry to the market would be met in these circumstances seems highly implausible; yet it is on the basis of these that the efficiency and equity of the markets is postulated. Indigenous and expatriate aid workers in Dhaka shared my bafflement at this proposal.

Whether in less extreme circumstances simply doling out money to those in distress would successfully remediate their condition is perhaps less likely to be met with incredulity. On the other hand, even, or especially, market ideologists tend to reject the idea that throwing money at a problem will make it go away. Furthermore, simply

imposing market discipline has been seen to have such disastrous effects that even the IMF and the World Bank have recognised the need for reform [Lall,1990].

Talking with Ton and others contributed greatly to my appreciation of just how difficult it is not to be dogmatic when you have the power; and the rich who intervene in the affairs of poor nations inevitably have power. Of course, my approach is not neutral. That which distinguishes it is, I think, the focus on paradigms. Neither the content nor process of local decisions is open to imposition; all one can offer in conceptual terms is accessible sets of tools. It is up to local social systems to incorporate them if they choose to do so; and perhaps this would provide an inbuilt response to the problem of trajectories.

Nevertheless, one can only act according to one's best beliefs; and, of course, mine are as likely to be disastrous as anyone else's. One reason for supposing that my work might be futile would be if my human ontology is skewed: what if people do get their kicks from win/lose rather than win/win scenarios?

It was a relief to chat with Dr Satheesh, a manager at a milk producers' co-operative in Tamil Nadu. Rather than introduce the model early, I was now discussing others' interests in general terms, and then superimposing the paradigm onto what they had said, to see where it fitted. Although he agreed with the general sense of the paradigm, he thought it failed to make enough allowance for animal aggression in us. I asked him if his doctorate was in biology, and he said no, he was a vet. We thought this very funny; but he may be right. My intellectual commitment is to our potential to transform ourselves through our imaginations, but it would be simplistic to deny that I have all sorts of urges which may be innate and irrepressible.

Anyway, let's pretend that he's a cynic, even if the third point suggests that he's an interesting and caring one. This was his argument for false consciousness: corruption can be both an inhibiting and a facilitating factor. To serve people well you may have to deceive them as to how you serve them. I disagree. Violence breeds violence, deceit breeds deceit; but I have to acknowledge that the political system in India would probably prove almost entirely intractable to any interventions of mine. Mutual back-scratching is not just a social institution in India. I would say it's the national sport. All the same, such wheeling and dealing can be done for the interests of the few or the interests of the many. As Dr Satheesh says, corruption can be facilitative as well as inhibiting.

Rao (from the Co-operative Management Institute) and I were later to agree that, in any case, where an instrumental ethic dominates, there is a strong possibility that the trust-based culture of co-operation will be eroded by opportunism. In India, the emphasis on the commercial success of co-operatives may be seen as encouraging this; responsibility to the community may be implied in most circumstances, but, very often, co-operatives are merely seen as an alternative form of running a business.

The Co-operative Development Foundation in Bangalore, where I met two of the management team, was strongly disposed towards this point of view. Understandably, given political intervention in and manipulation of the co-operative movement in India, as well as its sponsorship, there are those who are fiercely defensive of the co-operative's right to independence; to serve its members interests. A summary we agreed of their position reflects their rather 'rational economic behaviour' model of co-operation, in contrast to the more subtle delights of empathic and synergetic benefits, and the compensation through procedural co-operation for the failures of the market.

It's not that they didn't agree it would be that way in an ideal world; but they doubted that it could be sustained on any large scale in the foreseeable future.

In connection with this, I found that a number of people worked through homogeneous groups to build co-operative practice. Solid foundations, indeed, but does this address the wider issue? and, in desperate circumstances, should it? Is concern for others a luxury? Many people also mentioned the part security has to play in allowing co-operation to blossom.

Two Bangladeshis stressed this last point. Both were highly impressive, though they are very contrasting characters. Each operates effectively and to widespread admiration on aid projects with a budget of about \$1 million. Mobin deals with emergencies, which are as common in Bangladesh as rice in a paddy field; Siddique was dealing with the urban programme. In developing mutual aid, he consistently found the best results were achieved when starting with homogenous groups, whether the tie was gender, family, or region of origin of the participants.

On the other hand, a criticism of the Bangladeshi NGOs was made by a local development consultant. He had read *The Lords of Poverty* [Hancock, 1991] a book which extends Chambers' theory of development tourism to suggest that aid organisations end up merely serving themselves. When we praise effectiveness at the expense of ideals, we perhaps should remember that the corruption of ideals may itself be eventually ineffective.

The same issues arose in Oregon, *mutatis mutandis*. My meeting with Dwight and Russell of the Eugene [Oregon] Farmers' Co-operative reflected the CDF argument. They took me out to lunch at Annie's Diner, and ate steaks while I had a salad.

Although both come from farming backgrounds in Washington state, and each has a university education, they are radically different. Dwight thinks of himself as a working stiff, and brought Russell along as the intellectual of the organisation. Where the alternative currency and the bio-regional movement (which you have yet to meet) is idealistically motivated, Dwight and Russell are principled pragmatists. We could agree on all sorts of things, like the inadequacies of the market, and of coercion, but there was a sticking point, even though they also agreed that the communities of their childhoods were something else. The sticking point was that Dwight could only see co-operation arising from mutual advantage in what is, to me, a very narrow individualistic sense. A link that I could not establish for him was that this was inconsistent with his belief that those who bought individual insurance policies outside the co-operative movement for the sake of a few dollars were letting their fellow farmers down. His faith in market driven efficiency seems to me irreconcilable with his community values; but I failed to persuade him that the two were part of one system and needed to be treated as such. One is loyal to one's family and friends, but you only owe fair trading to others. I'll have to think more about this. If Dwight is right, he may have hit on a practical bio-regional solution.

I reckon, though, that he's underestimating the extent to which fair trading involves loyalty. If the market depends on fair trade, it depends on something way beyond calculation of personal or even family or small group advantage. An image that sticks in my mind comes from the backwaters of Bangladesh. I sat under a grass canopy on a mud floor with the twenty or so committee members of a credit union, who were trying to decide what to recommend should be done with their capital. The suggestion that was making most headway was that they should corner the local market in rice, and double their money later in the year.

Problems of scale

Whatever one hopes for universal peace and harmony, there can be little doubt that scale is a major problem for those who seek the equitable construction of social institutions.

One response would be to reduce the scale of human communities. In Oregon this is a popular idea, widely known as bio-regionalism. One of the founders of Alpha farm, a commune outside Eugene, is much committed to the idea. Her status as a consultant to major international companies on issues of trust adds an interesting piquancy to her views. I tend to disagree, in that, practically, I think that there are certain global phenomena which have to be dealt with globally. Perhaps an intensification of subsidiarity would have my vote, but disaggregation does not. My moral beliefs also rebel at the idea. We cannot disregard the needs of others even if they live half a globe away.

Disaggregation is not a principle that can be rejected out of hand, however, even if some of its manifestations appear naive. I met with a radical bio-regional free-marketeer who is promoting an alternative currency, on principles not dissimilar to the LETS approach. Unfortunately, although the motto on the currency is "In each other we trust", it is gradually becoming apparent to her that promoting a different kind of bank-note is not enough. The market isn't a perfect medium. It was never just the banks back east that made the American dream turn sour. We can't transform society simply by changing the currency, even though widespread currencies clearly reduce choices in local economic management in many ways.

If that sounds derogatory, it is not intended to do so. Any effort to build a self-managing society deserves praise to my mind; and while unpersuaded by the disaggregation argument, I cannot but notice how much it reflects the desire for community. A conversation which tilts me towards subsidiarity was held in the garden of a hotel where i met Dr Nehal as we each contemplated a particularly graceful tree.

He is a highly educated man, of wide experience, working as a human ecologist in the Himalayan border regions. With him I was able to explore the whole argument as an academic construct; as one of the lenses, in his metaphor, through which we might seek to understand our experience. He could accept it as a paradigm through which his views could be expressed, and contributed his own glosses and emphases:

From his experience in the hills, he had formed a view of the evolution of co-operation as a necessary aspect of marginal ecologies, which could be destabilised by alien cultures and expectations. Such events are increasingly likely, with the softening of administrative boundaries as political, cultural, and economic systems cease to be topographically coextensive.

Leadership would be significant in determining outcomes, but in a naive democracy; coercion, corruption and deceit are more common than leadership as the brokerage of dreams. In part this is due to the power of theatrical populism, and low expectations of benign, equitable rule, but the shape of society is also important. Indian society might be portrayed as a pyramid, compared to the British rhomboid, which is disheartening if one believes that a pragmatic middle class is necessary to sustainable social evolution. Nehal also mentioned the re-evaluation of the British Raj at Jawarhalal Nehru university. Traditional hostility has apparently given way to an acceptance that

in part the Raj was a form of benevolent coercion, without which the development of a trend towards equity might have been an even less happy experience.

Among the cultural phenomena influencing this trend, according to Nehal, are the problems of sectarianism, subsidiarity, and, potentially, disintegration (Nehal is of Hindu-Moslem extraction): and the voluntaristic nature of redistribution in Asian religions [Bose, 1984:113], which inhibits the building of the rhomboid society.

Two more comments about the size of society, each concerning ex-Yugoslavia, again stressing the tension between the arguments. Poldi, a software wizard from Slovenia, felt that his country, a nation of some two million people, may be about the right size; but a more cohesive factor may be the common tongue, or the sense that a European nation did not belong in a Balkan state, or even the small farmer tradition, which combined independence with co-operation, according to Poldi. Another point which is of interest is that Slovenia has a high suicide rate, which two Slovenian sociologists and Poldi agreed could be something to do with cohesion through conformity. There's nowhere for the oddballs to go except the coffin.

The second point concerns Bosnia. The English painter wrote that "the horrors in Bosnia are if anything due to a lack of coercion and an inability of any power e.g. UN, Nato, Europe, to take effective action." My response is to look at the mind-set of those who believe in a rights based morality. From such a viewpoint, intervention in the affairs of another state is difficult to justify, since the autonomy of sovereign states is one of the stranger myths of conventional politics. To turn Nozick's argument on its head, [Nozick, 1974:293] If a state came into being by illegitimate processes, how can it then claim sovereignty? And since history suggests that every state in the world has been imposed on its citizens, (and that the social contract is a very limited

acknowledgement of the right to participate in the creation of social institutions), the autonomy of the state is a myth adapted by the powerful to protect their primacy. This opinion may be doubled in the case of Yugoslavia, the creation of which was evidently expedient for the Yalta powers, and without consultation with the people.

Not that it would be reasonable of me to question the absence of a plebiscite in 1945 in the Balkans. Indeed, imposition of boundaries may have been the most useful response in those circumstances. It is their perpetuation regardless of the interests of those affected which I question. Subsidiarity would be my preferred alternative, but if I were Slovenian, I would have been as secessionist as they come.

All this, of course, supposes that the market doesn't erase the need for political negotiation of some kind. Opinion seems reasonably consensual on the principle if not the degree of this assumption, but it may be worth noting that if labour and exchange could be conducted in a spirit of right livelihood, the market might function as God's hand. Mahatma Gandhi expressed this Buddhist belief on a pillar in the station at Bangalore - not, I hasten to add, that he was a spray-can graffiti vandal; this was a posthumous poster quoting him.

Service which is rendered without joy helps neither the servant nor the served. But all other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy.

Ethical trading

Such synergy is not the common experience or outlook, I fear; yet the idea of ethical trading as a response to the problem of scale makes market institutions a vital ingredient of the imperfect society. My detestation of most of what Margaret Hilda Thatcher stood for seems to have confused me on this point initially.

One of the workers at the wholefood co-operative was sufficiently critical to trigger a major change in my outlook, although it was not until I'd been in the hotbed of west coast USA market enterprise that the issues really sorted themselves out. The father of this member is an oddball, who successfully entered the computer market to subsidise a communal style of life; yet what I seemed to be saying was that market and co-operation are irreconcilable.

The response I offered him was, I think inadequate in many respects, though it contained some interesting points. My inadequacy was due to a failure to distinguish clearly between the market as a useful mechanism, and the market as an ideology. In the former role, it is clearly subordinate to co-operative institutions, while the ideological interpretation often denies any structural limitations, and therefore of any need to compensate for them. At the time I analysed the problem by asking why people should use co-operative dynamics within the family and the clan, and yet be scornful of their generalisation to wider society. My answer was based on the idea that the ability to appreciate coercion is probably innate; to understand the possibilities of trading fairly accessible; but to accept the rationality of mutual responsibility requires both insight and faith in others. Why, then, do people not reject market theory, I asked? Because they are too stupid, I answered.

I do think there is some sense in this response. I don't believe that the problems of scale are the only reason why many people are reluctant to extend their domestic co-operative attitude to the wider community; and I also tend to believe that the aggression of the free market ideology has tended to invade the domestic realm. Nevertheless, if John remained dissatisfied on this point, which he did, it was an encouragement to me to sort out this mess of ideas. To blame my opacity on the

obscurity of the subject matter, even if it is complex, was never acceptable, since my very task was to try to clarify the rationale. I believe I did, eventually. *The market as an institution in which we exchange the differentiated products of our specialised labour can be highly beneficial; the market ideology, which claims that the outcomes of all such exchanges are just, is nonsense. The optimal form of social organisation will encourage market exchange; but it will also encourage social responsibility within the market, and in compensating for the structured failures of distribution of the benefits of exchange.*

Was I merely stupid in not recognising this, or is it like the crossword clue? Once you know the answer, its easy. Similarly, if eventually my argument appears to be Sybil Fawty's special subject - the bleedin' obvious - that may be a tribute to my analytic and integrative skills rather than evidence that I've spent most of these years of study down the pub.

A development management consultant in Dhaka, Javed, had similar difficulties in resolving these issues, though as a Moslem he couldn't resolve them in the company of a contemplative pint. From a socialist educational bias he had swung behind the free market. He could agree with the paradigm, but would be very reluctant to intervene more than minimally in market forces, essentially because of the complexity issue. My notes tell me we were eventually reconciled by the market institutions/market ideology distinction; but how to get one without getting the other we couldn't decide.

Had I visited Oregon earlier I might not have suffered so long in awaiting the distinction that allows one to detest and revere the market simultaneously. Carol is 70 years old, but still trades for a living, whatever she can trade. There are several co-

operative outlets for home-produced artefacts, and she is involved in most of them. She has chickens too in her backyard. I think it was principally through her that I recognised that while part of my attitude to the market at that time was due to a revulsion at many aspects of Thatcherism, this was grafted on to a good old English middle class snobbery about trade. Carol persuaded me, with her practical Episcopalian notions of contributing what you can, that there is no more honourable profession than manufacture and exchange. Commerce is a form of co-operation. Exploitation is not a necessary corollary of trading. Through that I came to the distinction between market as institution and market as ideology, which is now central to my way of thinking. (Amongst other contributions from Carol was my introduction to the slogan "Commit random acts of kindness and senseless beauty.")

The market idea was reinforced strongly by two of the workers who produced tofu in the same town. Both of them believed in trade, and did it well. They are the principal movers behind a business that is successful on many levels. I think they also liked the way I worked when I lent a hand, though they didn't have to reward me with enough tempeh to feed me for a week. Just being allowed to clean out the milk fridge which Ken Kesey had donated to the co-op would have been reward enough. Only connect, whether it be with each other or with your cultural roots; or in my case, disconnect from my cultural roots. Commerce is co-operative, and while professors and lawyers may not sully their hands directly, who has the power to validate their claim to more than their fair share of the output of society? Is it the small shopkeeper, or is it the middle class professional? Two guesses, and it's not the shopkeeper.

We're all involved in constructing the reward systems of our societies, even if only through acquiescence. What troubles me is the contrariety of the messages that are put out.

Bosse, the Swede, and one or two others commenting on the dissonance between expressed faith in the market and actual practice. Prakash typifies this. He is a wheeler-dealer in Kathmandu, whom I got to know because I asked him to make a shoulder bag to my own design.

This occasioned great excitement, as it might represent a brief market advantage. (Patents mean nothing in the bag trade. Innovations are copied very rapidly.) All in all, production of the prototype took several days, during which I spent a lot of time sitting cross legged in the shop with Prakash and his friends drinking tea. People come and go. Some deals are done. Prakash explains to me through a translator - Vishnu, from the cafe next door - that he is a businessman. He believes that market freedom is the great motivator, and that under such a system people get what they deserve. At one point a mountebank appears and clowns, touching my foot. No-one gives him money. Lazy people should be made to work. (On Nepali roads, in the hills, gangs of women break stones for ten hours a day with small hammers; work for food, and a share in a shelter.) Thieves should be punished. People get what they deserve; it's obvious.

Nevertheless, I notice that when an old friend comes by looking for work, Prakash is upset by not having any to offer him. Someone goes off on the motor-bike to fetch the clips needed to complete the bag. When he returns, there is a commotion; the clips were more expensive than expected. There is much discussion about whether the charge should be passed on to me. (Vishnu tells all later.) The collective decision is that it should not, even though I've said nothing. Businessman? Prakash? I don't believe that he's a rational economic man. The major dynamic in his life is principled social construction, even involving the women. The market he believes in is not the market ideology, but the institutions of the market. He's synthesised market and co-

operation for himself, as far as I could judge his behaviour over three days; but no public ideology validates his position for him.

The same contradiction was evident in Mahabalipuram, where I met Siva.

Mahabalipuram is a tourist resort for both travellers and Madrasis, partly because of the stone carving, partly because of the beach. When Siva's dad celebrated independence here on August 15th 1947, it was very different. Siva runs a small shop on the main street, just up from the bus depot. His dad was a bailiff for a landowner nearby. Their family history is woven into the land and its people, and the maintenance of tradition is paramount to him. It is a charitable tradition. Siva would give bananas to a beggar, and, at the festival of the cows, he stripped out quite a high proportion of his small stock to provide gifts for the orphanage. At the same time, he is rather aggressive in business. He delays payment for stock, if he can get away with it. His loyalty is to his family.

I remained puzzled by him. His practice was mostly more consistent with the paradigm than was his theory. He tended to see the world as largely corrupt, and therefore to be treated with chicanery; the ideal is impossible, live in the world as it is, especially when you have no pension rights. Once I defined *community* as that set of people from whom one doesn't expect immediate reciprocity. Standing by that, the lesson of Siva might be that communities with strong boundary maintenance -as is the case with both Tamils and Telugus - allow two sets of standards; not a very original thought, but well worth recalling, even if it took several days of conversations to recognise what was baffling me.

Honest trading was also central to the practice of Mr Sharma, proprietor of the best tea shop in Ilam. He was my favourite in the town, him and his family and friends.

Patrician, perhaps, though in no way pompous, and accepting responsibility to the community as befits a Brahmin. Of all the conversations we had, the last was the finest, because he'd imported a teacher from the school, and the town hall scribe, who is the local representative of Amnesty. Others joined in until it was seething with debate.

We talked quite a bit about local economics, and the problem of capital access, and so on. Everyone agrees that the political reforms are welcome; out here the old system was even more oppressive than in comparatively cosmopolitan Kathmandu. Coercion no good, but what's the relationship between the market and the culture? Do you pay the lowest wages you can get away with? They're glad to eat, says Sharma, and I'm not getting rich. Everyone laughs, including the staff who sleep on mats out the back, when the hubbub's explained to them.

Sharma is an Indian, and the Nehru/Gandhi tradition is to share the work around, as anyone who has tried cashing a travellers check at the Bank of India will know. Investment and trade is nevertheless seen as the key to prosperity, but what everyone seemed to like the most was the paraphrase of Bose; while it cannot be denied that "western capitalism has made the productive forces of the world yield richer fruit" man is, in the end, beholden to society. The Brahmins were assigned higher status and rights, but urged to adopt poverty willingly. Charity should ameliorate inequality [Bose, 1984:113,168].

So cultural conservatism in one way; respect for the higher traditions of the Hindu faith. Sharma's children will be taught as he was. If one wishes to graft onto this a more entrepreneurial spirit, there is no conflict. Initiative deserves a just reward. Just

like Carol in Oregon; honest trading is not vicious. It is the very breath of social involvement; but responsibility is the heart of it.

Is there any reason why this principle should not extend to international trade? Mobin, the emergency organiser in Dhaka, was particularly interested in relating the model to the position of Bangladesh in the global market. Bangladesh has an advantage in cheap labour, and that's about it. A lot of remittances from the Middle East and Britain has allowed some accumulation of capital in areas like Sylhet, but domestically there's not a lot going for it. Global competition simply means that Bangladesh remains poor, and without a huge development in human resources is likely to remain so. People like Mobin can help their children, but it is quite likely to be help in escaping, rather than to transform Bangladesh. Aid programmes can soften the edge of extreme poverty, but the Rostowian notion of a sequence which all nations can follow to become capitalist democracies is far fetched as long as the market is the dominant global ideology. Either we claim simply that the meagreness of the resource base available to those born in Bangladesh is a case of tough luck, or compensatory mechanisms are essential to justice in the global economy.

That is a position that has already been established, of course. What might be extracted from the contributions mentioned above are some of the subsidiary dilemmas that have to be resolved or understood: and the same applies to another response to scale.

Leadership

If I had messianic tendencies, I would have two acolytes; except, of course, that acolytes are not what I would seek, which would be alright with them.

Both worked at a fruit juice co-op in Oregon, and were anxious that I should make my message more of a crusade. Is this the tradition of moral leadership? Both were angry about their society, about the way power operates in it, through the media of persuasion backed up by brutal coercion. Lesley met me at the Oregon Country fair having read the summary of the argument and said she agreed with everything I'd written. I bet she pats stray dogs on the head, too.

Young, brave, and angry; and so were many others angry at the way in which leadership has become a matter of connivance and deceit - or possibly always has been. No-one felt this more strongly than some Brazilian friends of mine.

Margo has been a friend for a number of years. She visited me with her boyfriend Rodrigo. She is a medical research worker. He is a marine biologist.

Marga spoke mostly of the need for a new ideology in Brazil, where the cynicism of both the political and religious establishments is horrendous. Mutual respect is alien even to the middle classes, she says; if you see a purse lying around and do not steal from it, everyone will think you a fool. Families may encourage loyalty within, but they do little to promote social responsibility, in her opinion, and if they don't counteract public cynicism, she doesn't know who will. She also related a wonderful story about a co-worker who just wouldn't co-operate, and how a trust based group came close to implosion because of him. For Rodrigo, it was the marketing of the market ideology that represented the grossest distortion of leadership. An insight he offered was the way in which conceptual diversity is threatened through the market, by the constant trashing of the imagination by those who have something to sell. For each of them, the moral and political leaders of Brazil are as innocent as someone deliberately selling thalidomide as a headache tablet.

As in Brazil, so in India; but the corruption there perhaps lies most deeply not in the number of rupees that are salted away, but in the way that the idea of mutual responsibility is derogated. G N Rao, an economist at the Institute of Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram had this to add to my understanding. Firstly he reflected the notion that the nation-state is less useful as a unit of analysis than it used to be; although the concept of India, he said, is still highly significant. (Didn't Halsey claim that the nationalistic structure was disintegrating into racial and regional affiliations?) Market ideology accentuates this trend, in that it legitimates individualism. The middle classes no longer view public service as the goal. The young ideal is to become a highly paid technocrat, with the opportunity to work in the USA as the ultimate goal. I was reading Penelope Fitzgerald's *Innocence* at the time, and she quotes Gramsci on "the intellectuals who owe nothing to the middle class, and who will resist the temptation to depart their birthplace for the cities." [Fitzgerald, 1986:120]

Another aspect of disintegrating loyalty is the abuse of common property resources. Landowners pump water, regardless of falling water tables and saline intrusion. Village tanks (small reservoirs) are no longer cared for communally. Social solidarity is definitely not chic.

Does *chic* seem an inappropriate term for such a serious matter? G N and I, as well as Dr Nehal from the Himalayas and Tasveen Singh of the India Express [5/1/95] were in complete agreement that Indian politics is dominated by the theatre of personality, and perhaps the culture of entertainment is shifting. In Bollywood movies the traditional hero is a humble hero who saves the community from oppression; kids today watch the videos which sell songs, in which sexual attraction between young consumers is the predominant theme. Sound bite and theatre may well encourage the adoption of iconic magic mechanisms such as the free market, or the racialism evident in Shiv

Sena or the Telugu Pride movement. If the market depends on encouraging people to seek trivial and short-term satisfactions, why should not the political market behave in the same way?

Concurrent with such cynicism is the other Indian tradition, which is well represented in Kerala by the KSSP. I was introduced to its history by Radhakrishnan, who is auditor of the public employees' pension fund, and a KSSP activist.

KSSP was founded in 1962 to translate scientific texts into Malayalam, the Keralan language, but more to stimulate enquiring minds and counter superstition than to produce nuclear physicists. It has evolved since then, through the idea of science for a social revolution, towards advocacy and networking, as well as education through street theatre. Enablement for all through the sharing of the intellectuals might be a reasonable summary; Gramsci, thou shouldst be living at this hour.

Co-operation, unfortunately, has a mixed reputation in Kerala, as it does in other parts of India, because of political intervention. Co-operatives have thus become associated with corruption, sectoral interest groups, and technocracy, at the expense of the principle which might have once motivated the movement. So the macro-micro articulation of politics spins round, and the scale at which co-operation can best be introduced remains a puzzle. Nevertheless, I am frequently recalled to Lief's notion that my job is to wave a flag and say "Look what these guys are doing here." In terms of accessibility this probably applies best to small and medium scale enterprises.

Medium scale leadership

Simon was a close associate of mine in Bristol, and we have had a constructively combative relationship for all the time we've known each other. Typical of the

conversations we've had was Simon's assertion that it is not our circumstances that are competitive, but our conception of our circumstances. The issue of ascription also surfaced. Do we enter social contracts voluntarily, and do we have the power to amend them? Since Simon is something of a charismatic leader, and an effective one at that, we are always slightly at odds on this issue. I share with him the idea that many people if not inspired by someone else will remain unconstructive; but I differ from him in believing that it is only by creating the space for others to experience creative social construction that the potential can be unlocked.

It is fairly typical of the relationship between Simon and me that a matter of degree should have us gesturing and expostulating. Our disagreement on that issue is symptomatic of Simon's impatience and *ubermensch* mentality, from my point of view; and my deplorable unwillingness to take responsibility from Simon's. I'm glad the issue of leadership came up, though. There was lots of it about in the good old days in Bristol, and for all my naive yearnings, I have to confess that most of the community projects which seemed to me the most delightful originated with an individual or a small group with a strong sense of purpose and a talent to persuade. This experience is replicated in the literature on producer co-operatives [Bradley and Gelb, 1983:12; Paton, 1978:32; Woolham, 1987]. However, there also seems to be a strong case for distinguishing between those who have the qualities necessary for innovation and development, and those who can maintain a project in the longer term. Management literature these days seems to reflect this recognition; that no individual meets every requirement. Complementary teams are the way to get things done. What such literature often seems to miss is that this may imply a network differentiated by function, but not necessarily one in which decision making powers and financial and status rewards correlate with centrality.

Another who, in terms of activity at grass roots level, is your man comes from a village in Kerala. Ganghadaran is a teacher and an activist. Some might say he is an example of facilitative corruption, since his teaching duties seem to be suspended at times to allow his community work to progress. It would be hard not to admire someone so dedicated and hospitable, but I must admit to doubts about the technique.

Gangadharan is a great one for starting from the objective realities of the situation, which he believes will lead scientifically to the solution. As with many Marxists, I think he underestimates the significance of dreams in the redesign of society. Not that he is not consultative. In his panchayat they have assembled volunteers to survey the area, and committees have been formed to act on the social, economic and ecological inadequacies discovered. This is great in terms of praxis, I would guess - learning by doing, debate and action hand in hand. Some of the outcomes are excellent, too, but I couldn't help feeling that the successes have been more than coincidental with the presence of a charismatic leader, and surely depended on the support of networked KSSP supporters in strategic positions in the state ministries. Success may, therefore, be less attributable to the technique of participation, and more due to other factors.

To take another example, the President of the Presidents of the Panchayats of Kerala is extremely interested in the education projects, and I was much impressed with what they have been able to do. His achievements may, however, have a lot to do with his fame throughout Kerala for his handlebar moustache and for having chased the British out. The more I think about it, the more persuaded I am of the significance of a leader as a broker of dreams. Would Gangadharan be more effective if he were to accept that he is himself a charismatic leader, and that he could accomplish more if he were less concerned with the formal structures of participation?

Even if we accept the ideal of equitable participation, the practice of it, even the identification of good practice, is essentially problematic. This was the topic around which many of my conversations in Kerala revolved. Leadership through the construction of a shared vision seems to me to be a seriously under-rated form of equitable participation. In the case of Kerala Dinesh Beedi, charismatic leadership and institutionalised power seemed, to me, to form a curious mix that displays both the power of vision, and its potential use to reinforce the status of the visionaries.

The story may be familiar. KDB is well known in development circles, partly because of its successes, and partly, I suspect, because of the marketing genius of Dr Panickar. He was seconded from the Indian Administrative Service, the civil service elite, when national legislation on conditions for beedi rollers led to the withdrawal of out-of-Kerala capital. The embarrassment of losing 12,000 jobs almost overnight led to considerable co-operation between state authorities, national institutions, workers, and the powerful local unions. Within a few years, the 12,000 jobs had been recreated, under vastly superior work conditions: better wages, job security, a say in the running of the firm, health assurance, and so on. In India, however, state investment in a co-operative means that labour does not hire capital: the state will tend to hold a golden share in the control of the firm. On the other hand, if we accept the idea that the firm has responsibilities to the community in which it is embedded, one seemingly appropriate way of ensuring this is that the elected representatives of the community should have a hand in the management of the firm.

In this case, then, there appears to have been genuine advantages to the workers in having a visionary leader; but the power conferred by success has tended to reinforce the status and authority of the leader and his cohort, rather than to allow others opportunities to make manifest their visions. Don't get me wrong. Dr Panickar has

done an amazing job, and the two colleagues who vetted me before I met him were seriously committed to some democratic ideal. They debated the paradigm with me, accepted its relevance to their work, and the tentative identification of dissonance that I made; that is, whether the element of benevolent elitism represented a pragmatic compromise in a hostile environment, or the maintenance of a privileged elite who might, having cleared a space, allow others to operate within it.

I tend to think the latter. They, very reasonably, proposed the former. They have the labels for the packets of beedi printed in Tamil Nadu, where the non-unionised labour allows lower costs than in Kerala; but at the same time they agitate for the unionisation of labour in Tamil Nadu, in order to give the workers a say in the running of firms. Perhaps the most useful way of interpreting this is to suggest the following: co-operation has to be shown to be effective at the intuitive or calculative level if the more abstract principle of procedural co-operation is to become widely understood and expected.

But what if the cynics are right, and these are not pragmatic steps, but a new mask for an old feudalism?

Ascription and self-definition

If one wished to express the whole issue of ascription vs self-definition, I don't think one could do much better than Amanda did. She was working at one of the projects to which I contributed in Bristol, as well as helping a collective women's help line. Experience has taught her to be wary of white men offering women empowerment. She is a painter, frustrated at the moment, but hopeful. What she said which struck

me as a fine summary was this: "There is not an omnipotent creator into whose works, I, as an artist, walk..."

From the summary to the particular, Subbu, the blind leader writer, sees India moving from the ascription of feudalism and the Raj to a more associative and volitional form; while Chandran of the IDS in Thiruvananthapuram argued that India is structured by a hierarchy of ascriptive loyalties, from family, via community largely defined in terms of race and language and locality, to caste.

However, although an interesting set of perspectives could be gleaned from my Indian conversations, it was in eastern Europe that I was most aware of ascription, or perhaps I should say, of its aftermath. A woman running an employment scheme in north-eastern Germany helped me to explore the idea that the west had been sold to the east deceitfully. We agreed that the market in west Germany had been dependent on the social institutions in which it was embedded; but there seemed to be no plan to help those who had been brought up to follow ascribed roles to learn how to participate in social construction.

A lot of what I learned came about through a journey I made to a conference in Dessau. For example, the agreement to seek agreement was emphasised by a very competent and co-operative Berliner woman, as well as by many people in Oregon. It is not difficult to understand how authoritarian communism, which insists that everyone must get on well together should produce such a response. Cultures which determine with whom I must co-operate are of immense potency, as I discovered on my overland journey to Dessau.

One of my companions was at the Isle of Wight in '69, as was I; and if hippies and Quakers recur in these reports, is it surprising? My other companions were from an artists' co-operative, whom John had invited, without consulting me, to join us. An hilarious script could be developed from the journey, because I became quite simply infuriated by one of my companions. From some perspectives the woman in question is, I am sure, an inspiration. Unfortunately, my ideal of leadership (where leadership is vested in an individual) is of the leader as a broker of dreams rather than as a charismatic egomaniac.

If ever I had the opportunity to observe how a presumption of consensus can be manipulated, this was it. The most obvious manoeuvre is a persistent refusal to compromise, and to assume that anyone who displays a willingness to split the difference with others, will split the difference again. Zeno's turn to be living at this hour: and when I could no longer maintain my policy of gracefully acquiescing in majority decisions, the inversion that describes democracy as the denial of minorities became abundantly clear. Others have studied these operations in more detail than I have. The important point, however, breakdown can be very costly, so that the unwillingness of members to risk breakdown can become a lever of power. I was able to choose breakdown. Many are not in a position to do so, if only because they recognise that if they choose this course, they may be the subject of much resentment.

Events inform us as well as interviews, and this was clearly an area in which more exploration of the implementation of co-operative ideals could inform my experience. Interestingly, Fisher and Ury only discuss negotiations from which you can walk away [Fisher and Ury, 1982]; and this is one of the difficulties of the bio-regional approach to the problem of scale, for if you walk away from your home territory to where do you

walk? Many young Polish women don't like the roles on offer to them, but they do not necessarily have much choice beyond walking to the truckstops along the German-Czech border and working as prostitutes.

These issues of ascription and social construction were relevant to many of those who attended the conference at Dessau, who had come from the old centrally planned economies to discuss how collective self-direction might be possible. My intuitive understanding of an eastern European perspective, to the extent that there is such a coherent body of reactions, was clearly limited, though I have come more to grips with it over the last few years. I was still using the questionnaire at Dessau, and Ulf, a student, was mightily suspicious of the approach. After 25 years growing up in authoritarian society he didn't want co-operation to be another set of rules, he wanted it based on trust.

Ironically, I felt that there might be an excess of trust of westerners. I fear that some of those with whom I discussed my ideas simply clapped their hands in astounded admiration because I might be an alternative authority. Those in power nearly always like to think they are loved for themselves rather than for the effects they might have on others' lives; hence, I imagine, the sanctification of sycophancy under the banner of fitting in.

Lyudmilia and Valentina were so enthusiastic about my argument that I suspected them of some hidden motive, which may have been unjust. Valentina is a lecturer in Kiev, one of those who were invited to address the conference. Lyudmilia was also invited from the Ukraine, where she is an entrepreneur in the retail trade. Her experiences have been mind-boggling. In talking about them she piled chaos on catastrophe, then tossed it all aside with the breezy remark that it didn't matter much,

because she and her husband are optimists. Perhaps that is the explanation for her enthusiasm for my argument. Although I believe it may be a useful contribution to debate, I'd be surprised if it answered all the world's problems.

Perhaps it was the contrast with Tess that made me cautious in accepting their praise. I've mentioned her already as the daughter of a carpenter and the grand-daughter of the first communist in Uppsala; and from her free-thinking background she rigorously challenged everything I'd written.

Martin was challenging, too. His family's farm was returned to him after reunification. Eventually he wants to run it as an organic commune. For him, the importance was not in the detail, but in the spirit of the argument. Where I asked if force might always be necessary, he preferred the term *control*: I am uncertain whether or not it was at this point that the distinction between coercion *per se* and as damage limitation entered the argument, but it may well have been. The form that I have adopted has been to suggest that in the latter case force was used reluctantly, minimally, with normative sanction, and with a reformatory intent, rather than as a justifiable principal dynamic of social organisation.

This appealed to the Berliner woman whom I mentioned, Octavia, whom I met in the company of Elvira, a Ukrainian. Both are middle-aged professional women, each involved in the transitional issues for people like themselves. They raised the ascription issue by asking whether the Mafiosi can be said to co-operate amongst themselves. A fair question: entry is voluntary, even if once in you cannot get out. Eventually my resolution to this problem was to suggest that since discourse assigns roles, rights and responsibilities [Goffman, 1969], an emancipatory or co-operative discourse must permit free entry, involvement and departure [Brauer, 1996]. Perhaps

the most consistently repeated issue, however, was the feeling that the free market ideology is incomplete. The simplistic triumphalism typified by Fukoyama [1989] was encouraging a binary opposition that failed to recognise the virtues of solidarity and the inherent failures of market structures. Foremost amongst these to Octavia and Elvira is the destruction of trust that the ideology promotes. As I suggested in the validation process, the market can be ascriptive too, especially in the way that those who do not share market values tend to be defined as deviant.

Krystof had more faith in the market than that. He is the director of a major indigenous development agency in Poland. Few of the consultants foisted on eastern Europe were competent in business, in Krystof's view, let alone on wider social issues. Since this is a market effect, I felt that he was contradicting himself rather; but at that stage I was still mired in my antipathy towards the market, and my confusion presented a satisfactory resolution of the point. Luckily I've met him since, and he accepted the resolution I offered in the paradigm; as I must accept that the market can be emancipatory as well as ascriptive.

Overall it seemed to me that there were at that conference many east Germans who were aware of the limitations of both market and coercion, and frustrated by the lack of a coherent ideological alternative.

Christian who runs a youth club/pub in Dessau practices what I preach. Marion and Karen, who are responsible for re-development projects in the north, are also stressed by the conflict between the dominant ideology and what they believe to be effective practice. Anne, working in women's projects in Dresden, could also have used learning materials that offered an alternative to perpetually improving washing powders. There is a space in the education system for something other than the simplistic

individualism that is promoted, willy-nilly, by an international culture dominated hierarchically by those with a probably sincere belief that what is good for them is good for others, and that their wealth is evidence of their genius and individual creativity. *If you're so clever, why ain't you rich?*

There are alternatives, of course, though I am not alone in being underwhelmed by the ability of the co-operative and socialist movements to offer a coherent rationale for their beliefs. Nor do I feel that there is a lack of ideas or examples.

Dave Thomson in Bristol contributed a lot. He's another old mate, working co-operatively as the circumstances allow, trained as a social worker and still recycling paper. He reckons you learn co-operation in the home as a child; so how do we persuade parents to respect their children? How do we learn how to build a shared vision? The conventional education system teaches conformity not self-definition. One gloss he put on this is well worth quoting, I believe. "Unless you have a sense of self, co-operation is coercion by another name."

Most impressive to me, however, in many ways were the loose-knit group of women whom I met in Delhi. This opportunity arose through my friendship with a Sikh woman during the development studies masters course. She has returned to India, and is working in several women's organisations in the capital.

Several organisations? Several used to mean something approximating to *discrete*, but the structure in which these initiatives take place is more complex than that. The term I have coined to describe it is *chiaroscuro network*. This refers to the painting terms for the use of light and shade, and came to mind because of a film I saw, and a description of the light in the basti areas - the modern slums of Delhi. The film was

looking at the patriarchal destruction of a women's religious sect. One of the points it made was that the devotees shared an arena for dance. When men took over, they reified their egos in phallic towers in the middle of the space.

To me the chiaroscuro network represents a slight modification of the network tradition which sees people as the nodes, with a web formed by the lines that link them. I see the network as an adaptive social phenomenon within which people have the opportunity to define themselves and change roles and status. Just as the women used to dance, while others sat in the shady surrounds, so do the Delhi women I met move around, sometimes taking the limelight, sometimes supporting others. Although during my week in Preeti's company I met and spoke with many of her colleagues, I only specifically interviewed four, Preeti, Juhi, Maya and Sarojini. The first three all felt comfortable with the co-operative paradigm. With Sarojini I just discussed her work.

Her work in some ways exemplified the chiaroscuro network to me, since she has maintained her connections with a variety of organisations, and used the social space created to synthesise a number of initiatives. At the heart of her efforts is the attempt to validate indigenous medical knowledge, including meditation and herbal medicine in the context of western science.

Preeti operates in a similar way, though she is still finding her feet. She has various roles in three women's organisations, and is seeking to make user friendly woman controlled contraception available. There is a core group with which she works, each of whom has other responsibilities in other areas. I attended one of their get-togethers, and wouldn't pretend that what they are doing is all easy or sweetness and light. It must also be conceded that many of them are being subsidised, as Preeti is, by a fond

father, or enlightened partner. Whether their approach could be replicated in another context, and whether the paradigm of chiaroscuro network is worth developing are just two of the questions which will remain loose ends.

I must, however, say a little more about Juhi. Juhi is now administrator for the Indian Association for Women's Studies, another network. She's pretty assertive, with a vivid mind. We spoke a lot about the way in which social contracts are formed, particularly in the context of the chiaroscuro organisations. Given the flexibility and movement, to say nothing of the self-definition, it is easier for people to experiment, and Juhi believes that an apprenticeship/leadership paradigm makes sense where you can move between the various roles. While the division of labour is good for efficiency, it can also lead to entrenched differentiation; but where there is an ideological commitment to mutual support, fluidity can be retained with the benefits of specialisation and expertise; and when you leave a particular arena, you remain part of the net.

One other point that came from our meeting: changing our view of ourselves doesn't necessarily change others' views of us. Juhi has managed it, however. Her husband does the cooking on alternate nights, which even in Delhi would be looked on by many as dangerously radical. Self-definition can lead to all sorts of stresses where society is predominantly prescriptive.

Even where it isn't, the continual negotiation of personal deals is likely to prove more wearing, if potentially more rewarding, than everyone wearing explicit uniforms. At a co-operative in Bristol, John and Jane are in the co-ordinative roles these days, and talking to them severally and together the focus of the conversation became stress: positive stress as well as negative stress. Jane in particular spoke of the negative

stress that others' expectations of you can arouse; but the ability to redefine one's roles, rights and responsibilities as one goes along is very valuable, if the organisational structure can sustain it. There was no thought of turning back.

They weren't alone in raising the issue of stress. Many of those who work in co-operatives, including the wholefood co-op in Brighton, find it a concern. Although there is opportunity in participation, there is also responsibility. The workings of the organisation can pervade every waking hour, in thought if not in deed. The chiaroscuro network strikes me as a potentially useful paradigm in this context. You can move from light to shade, from activity to rest, changing roles as well as linking up with people who are not in any formal organisational relation to you.

Participation and the ownership of language

Following on from this, there is the whole question of the ownership of language. I've already referred to my interest in how roles, rights and responsibilities are laid out in discourse, and how each discourse has conditions of entry, involvement and departure. Before that paradigm developed, I'd already had several intimations that my choice of language would be an issue.

For example, a young man and young woman who work together making the pizzas and other more exotic delights that are sold in the Brighton shop took me to a yard decorated by a 1953 Dodge, and by neon signs proclaiming the supremacy of Budweiser. A den of international capitalism, then, although both of these are proud of their working class origins. Beer from a jug and three glasses softened their attitudes, which had been tending towards suspecting me of another bloody ideology. They accepted my explanation; although I share Polanyi's view of the primacy of tacit and

intuitive knowledge, the ideological battlefield is a verbal one. If we do not contest it, we are dooming ourselves to live in a hostile environment. She liked that. Her grandad was an intelligent and literate, though not literary, northern socialist, and it felt as though she was wondering what he'd have thought of my ideas. Apparently he might have approved of them, since after discussion, they did; but, they celebrated the creative and the emotional in particular, as well as the intuitive; theory is all very well but the affective constituents of belief have to be addressed.

Greater difficulties might be expected where other languages are spoken, but the possible dislocation is greater than this. Rationalities, cultural histories, and personal experience vary widely. My failure to keep this in the forefront of my mind was an occasional problem.

Take, for example, Vishnu in Kathmandu. His mother runs a cafe. Dad is a doorman at a hotel. Sister is very beautiful, an efficient waitress, and spits into the street with great accuracy. The cafe's for locals, though I don't suppose I'm the only traveller who's eaten there. They've become used to me over several days, and amused by my business with Prakash the bagman.

Vishnu, like Krishna, is a chetri, but unlike Krishna is a communist. Reading business studies, but a communist. Does he believe in state ownership? It's better than private ownership. What about the problem of incentives? Yes, with the market there are more things and cheaper. So what about taxation - yes; health, education, and so on. Why should the hard working man shell out his earnings to the lazy? Because too often his earnings are the product of his access to capital, which is a matter of luck. Not of righteous living in a previous incarnation? Get real, John. How do we decide what is luck and what is deserved? The people must decide. The panchayat system?

Was that not good for the poor? More responsible than the market? "Yes, but the panchayat it was not completely help." What of communism? In unity is strength.

Getting not very far not very fast. Then we hit on forestry and it all comes clear. I have a paper with me on various initiatives treating the forests as a common property resource. Mum notices the illustrations. Family discussion, though dad's not there. Out near Jiri, where they come from, the forests though the property of the crown, were managed by the local community. Then, when the panchayat system came in, the forests were moved into public management. Corruption and the tragedy of the commons superseded sustainability. Commercial management was no answer; they'd just strip the land and move on. So back to community management? If it can be done, the trust rebuilt.

What do I infer from this? That if a paradigm is at all applicable, you listen to them first, and then you can express it in their language - but the validation of the constructs used in a paradigm, their honing and refining, requires something like the specificity of a questionnaire. Techniques for first stage, second stage and third stage legitimization are not necessarily identical.

Others face similar problems of translation, of course. Perhaps since each of us has many roles, we all face those difficulties. Maya in Delhi did. There is a dichotomy sometimes expressed in the women's movement between the academic and the activist. Although this is apparent in the extremes, where a woman with money may publish monographs on the work of others, and illiterate women prove very effective at community organisation, most of those whom I met combine the roles. Maya works with basti women 'living outside the institution of marriage'. Attempts to get mutual aid groups going are hindered by the fragmentation of life in the city, especially where

people with diverse regional loyalties find themselves in competition for scarce resources.

Maya romanticises and dramatises the basti women. Having felt this, I later discovered that she is a poet and writer as well as community worker; but how many people can genuinely interpret between the sere precision and intellectual rigour that is commonplace among academics into the demotic or the poetic or the visionary forms which make their ideas accessible and persuasive to those who have not learned how to think?

Or, even more so, those who have learned how not to think. Amongst these I would number the guru of Varanasi bus station, whose honoured guest I was for over two hours. Given the mercenary overtones that cynics detect in some eastern religions, Joni Mitchell's line "He gave me back my smile, but he kept my camera to sell" came to mind as a warning. This must be considered relevant to any discussion where there are vast disparities of wealth, and the potential advantage of being acquainted with a westerner can be significant. In this case, at least, however, there was no evidence that this played a part. Harrihar Pandey and I simply got along excellently, and if one accepts the notion that life is an elaborate metaphor for cricket, the principle medium of our conversation must be allowed. The bus station television showed Tendulkar on 179 and Sidhu 100 not out, against the West Indies, as I remember, so his eagerness to talk of cricket was understandable.

Whether or not a transcript of our discussion would persuade others that Harrihar had contributed to the legitimisation process or not I do not know. At one point, while I was chuntering on about the market, he interrupted by saying "Wally Hammond"; at least I had the sense to revert to cricket then. Perhaps I should be content with his

conception of spiritual development as the transcendence of ego, like Alex on the Oregon farm, and Boulding in his synthesis of empathy and exchange. I wouldn't dream of claiming that he gave approval to my paradigm. His principal response to specific issues I raised seemed to be amazement that this way of looking at things should be in question. Life is a metaphor for cricket, and those who do not speak cricket would not have been able to translate our conversation.

Sometimes the *weltanschauung* makes translation virtually impossible, and not because of different home towns. It's simply a matter of moral, ontological, aesthetic or epistemological commitments. Consider the lectures I delivered to the senior years at Ilam College, the graduates of which are probably at about first year level of a reputable British University, if there are any of those left. There I met the head of English, who after my lecture to 70 students and 5 staff, asked several questions in public that had me leaping around, and then thanked me privately, and, I felt, sincerely. One of his questions made me realise that I had to clarify the priority I give to co-operation; even though he shared my view, how was I rationalising it? Another question concerned the role of the humanities in co-operation, a point I had not properly considered. A good question though, to which I replied, *ad lib*, (of which I am rather proud), that aesthetic pleasure need not be resource intensive, that our stories are our lessons, and that if co-operation is concerned with social construction, communicative skills are essential.

Several of the students followed the argument well; I asked them to reconstruct it with help, as part of the lecture. Several liked it, too; but there was also a personable but repugnant business studies teacher, who collected signed certificates from US academics thanking him for helping with their research. He hoped to get another from me, and perhaps I owe him something, because when I spoke to his class, I was

reminded how selective I've been with my audiences. They just thought that if you've got an edge you use it. Empathy was not a construct that resonated, reverberated, tingled, or in any other way impinged on their understanding of social organisation; and without that idea of mutual responsibility in your head, there is little of my argument to latch on to.

Usually though, I feel, a well constructed paradigm should be accessible to translation into most relevant discourses. Sometimes it is not surprising. With Gita Sen, a professor at the Indian Institute of Management, who has worked with the development studies group at the Open University, it was hardly surprising to find a high degree of common ground between the paradigm and her answers to the question:

What would you suggest as the likeliest points of failure of a sustainable development system managed by

- a) a coercive superstructure
- b) according to "invisible hand" ideology
- c) according to co-operative principles?

A precis of her reply might go something like this.

Coercion is sometimes presented as the least costly option, but this is an illusion. Those who bear the costs are often inaudible. The lack of accountability and transparency in a coercive system prevents any true audit being accomplished, as well as licensing corruption. Simultaneously, where there is little responsiveness, there are many needs which remain unrecognised. Coercion also begets the need for further coercion.

The invisible hand ideology is rather different. A coercive government may devise and vary its own criteria according to its circumstances; the market ideology is easier to assess as a general phenomenon in terms of its own claims. In this respect, it may be thought to fail. There are several profound and pervasive weaknesses, most notable amongst which are that it fails to account for social needs, and assumes equal opportunities in its rationale of equity. Evidently, however, past discriminations and inequalities are embodied in present opportunities. Sustainability is threatened by any system which puts private interest before the public, though it must be conceded that the system appears to promote innovation. The most damning feature, in the end, is probably that costs and benefits are unevenly and inequitably distributed.

One reason why it can be difficult to consider co-operation is that although it may be a matter of principle, it can also emerge as a response to niche market opportunities; the famous Grameen Bank in Bangladesh is an example that many people know, and credit unions in the UK may also be considered to fit this category. A further difficulty in assessing co-operation is that it seems always to take place in an environment dominated by either coercion or by the market. Problems often attributed to co-operation - inertia and a lack of innovation - were dismissed as contingent.

There are, however, intrinsic problems. Hierarchies may offer lower quality of life, but demand only manageable information flows. The success of co-operation depends a lot on participants being able to handle complexity; and where participation shifts towards managerial specialisation, the control of information allows the power of definition and various forms of degeneration. Furthermore, ideas of consensuality and self-discipline not only demand trustworthiness, but impose an obligation to take others at their word. The unscrupulous, or even the unaware, may easily take

advantage of this to distort equity of reward or control. Nevertheless, co-operation is the most promising of the three dynamics.

Learning

I hope that no-one would suspect that I would take parallel lines of thought between myself and a professor as confirmation of my theory. A contribution to legitimisation or validation, yes. Confirmation of anything else, no. Nevertheless, it encouraged me to consider how to communicate a potentially useful paradigm, and how to put an audience in the mood to consider changing their mindset.

The South African management consultant had praised the aim: creative thinking can transform apparent conflicts of interest into win/win opportunities. At a later conference we mused over the difficulties of persuading people to go through the pain of learning to do so. Rajagopalan and Santhakumar, of the humanities department at the Indian Institute of Technology at Madras, also spend a lot of time trying to develop the capacity of decision-making organisations to become more amenable to the idea that effective decision-making relies on more than the application of validated paradigms. They are up against two barriers. The first is the tradition of authoritarian education in this part of the world - Rajagopalan co-ordinates workshops for the whole region on coastal management. Secondly, there is a tradition of authoritarian government. Rajagopalan assured me that Siva's confusion over values is reproduced throughout India. The British Raj and the caste system: Gandhi and market economics. Both he and Santhakumar believe that an ideological paradigm such as mine might help to resolve some of these apparent confusions, but their practical concerns reflected how to open people to the possibilities of reconstructing their belief systems.

In this they reflected the very reasonable pre-occupation of Richard Bawden; how do we shift people towards holonocentrism - or however else we may describe the phenomenon of accepting the partiality of descriptions. For Santhakumar this issue might be discussed in terms of a model not dissimilar to Bawden's. Santhakumar believes that the agencies of economic development have moved past the technocentric phase, into a more ecocentric mode, but in our discussions we agreed that even this required extension into a recognition of the role of ideology. Is it acceptable to argue that the holistic relativism of holonocentrism is reflected in political terms as a co-operative paradigm?

One approach Rajagopalan and I considered to open up people's minds. My suggestion was based on role play; two similar scenarios, one to be acted out at the beginning and another at the end, to emphasise the change in conception that Rajagopalan was seeking to establish; roughly speaking, technocentric to ecocentric. (That has proved to be a useful paradigm.) We ended up with a compromise, with Rajagopalan planning to adopt a role that is familiar to both Indian and European theatre; the intermediary between stage and audience, who comments, jokes, links and challenges. He felt that the senior civil servants whom he addressed would be able to pick up on a relativist interpretation of the papers delivered, but that they would feel threatened by any chance of making fools of themselves. Making choices between diverse authorities is only part of the journey, but is a stage beyond the belief in a unitary authoritative algorithmic knowledge. It is at least a step towards acceptance of the equitable construction of social institutions.

Others in India felt that the education system failed to encourage conceptual pluralism. A young teacher in northern Kerala, Puroshotoman, shared my concern for

the way in which the education of children can instil in them an ideology without teaching them to question it.

The education system itself is severely affected by market forces; what might be called the Harman syndrome. To do your best for your children you put them into private education. This reduces resources in the public system, creating a further inducement to withdraw your children. In this panchayat, they have acted vigorously to reverse this process. The schools share resources and best practice, the community is much involved, and there is a much greater tendency towards pupil centred learning than seems to be the norm in this part of the world; but, according to Puroshothaman, pupil centred should be understood to mean the student community. We shared the view that all achievements are built on the efforts of others as well as ourselves, while the aggressive individualism that permeates much of traditional English schooling, on which the Indian was based, instils a zero-sum game mentality. The whole school system is a lesson in social practice that may be beneficial, or may simply reflect an ideological hegemony.

It was this that drove both myself and Paul out of the school system. He seemed to be my *alter ego*. I met him in Amsterdam, at a sculpture warehouse and eatery on the old docks, and we met again the next day. We're both teachers who loved teaching but not staff rooms. We've both made our livings doing building work, because it is practical and leaves you your independence. He's off to Angola to work with refugees. This is what he said about it: We want to work together, to enter a shared space; not to get into sonic healing with a dijeridoo, joyful though that may be. I go as an imperfect person to share what I have to offer, and to accept what others bring. To develop myself I must work with others. The best teacher is always yourself, but you must work with others as well as with a mirror. No wonder he didn't survive the staffroom.

Education, of course, does not only take place in schools. P K Swamy could easily be described as an educationalist, even if his formal job description is as a promoter with the Entrepreneurial Development Institute of Ahmedabad. We spoke for two hours on a station platform, and then for a further four or five at his home, so that I nearly missed my train; but it was worth it. EDI seem to be able to knit together the local, state and national interests in a way that Community Development Foundation seem to see as beyond their capacity.

I may be prejudiced, since Swamy was so enthusiastic about the paradigm, and about the idea of paradigms and conceptual intervention. Nevertheless, an extract from the annual report of the organisation may help to indicate another reason for me to be so disposed: "An institution belongs to the society. And to the society it is accountable.....we are presenting ourselves for social audit." Perhaps this perspective is unsurprising in a venture which is funded largely by publicly owned banks, but it is surely not inescapable.

Their approach is to work at all levels simultaneously, through advocacy and networking. To take one of Swamy's projects: while the temple maids [i.e. slave prostitutes] are encouraged to reinvent their lives, so the bankers are encouraged to re-evaluate their understanding of the women. The aim is to combine movements towards self-management with economic independence, to lay the foundations of social dignity; but the entrepreneurial orientation does not preclude the obligations for fair trading and other social responsibilities.

In terms of technique, the project illustrates the iteration that may be necessary to conceptual intervention, since the bankers tend to work from the general and abstract

to the particular and concrete, while Swamy's paradigm for facilitation at the grass roots is

| | | |
|------------|----|-----------|
| known | to | unknown |
| simple | to | complex |
| concrete | to | abstract |
| short term | to | long term |
| individual | to | group |

The aim is shared problem definition and response, with acceptance of leaders as facilitators. I was impressed, and delighted that there were practitioners who seemed to recognise that intuitive co-operation is only a part of the whole picture. Dealing with difference is the only way to maintain diversity and accessibility, even if I understand why Siddique and others prefer to work with homogeneous groups.

However much can be done in such circumstances, however, co-operation may well be best learned in the home, as Mary at Asllomar and others suggested, or through a voluntary apprenticeship. This may make the paradigm or any other formal learning aid superfluous; though I tend to think that it could help to bring to the surface and resolve many tensions that are familiar in co-operative groups.

James and Angie at the farm commune in Oregon seemed to think so, having taken a year out to think about things. James had been in the commune for a long time, and Angie nearly as long. We sat at a table on the fourth of July, watching the volleyball, and the ~~lets-see-how-many-of-us-kids-can-get-in-a-hammock-without-falling-out~~.

Amongst their comments were these:

when we see what we think of as a dysfunctional family, do we not feel quite strongly that people are internalising false values, including evaluations of themselves?

some people have to learn to listen, but others have to learn to be assertive

we have to learn to be adaptable, to accept that fulfilment can come in many forms. (I invented The Golden Rule that everyone can understand this, and the rule was endorsed by The Disconfirmation of Angie's Mother, who is, apparently, as inflexible as a determined goat on crack.)

if we then accept that not all families are likely to instil co-operative values, the importance of other learning environments is established. Some, but not all, co-operative enterprises function well in this respect.

A city farm in Bristol seems to be one such place. Nick cares for the animals. He comes from an agricultural family. He feels himself to be in transition from a family-orientation that seems quite common among farming folk, to participating in developing a collective purpose at the city farm. Responsibility is the key issue for him. Too much diffusion is dangerous. He's not sure how he'll be able to translate that when he goes back to rural farming, but he wants to try. Both he and Sarah (who has the daughter who watches cartoons) seem to be into a learning curve directed towards inventing a co-operative process that will work in their context.

Sally at the farm commune seemed further down that road. She has a child from a conventional marriage, from the days when she used to be conventional. Her negotiations with her daughter, which I witnessed while around the farm, suggested how she might go about developing a capacity for co-operation. That others responded to her qualities was evident in her election to roles of responsibility whenever the farm routine was disrupted by a special occasion. Part of her charm can be summed up in her ability to convey that her gain could never be at your expense, since your loss was her loss, too. The principle is familiar; in the hippie argot, *murder is suicide, cruelty is masochism*. Wilfred Owen said it too: *Whatever dream was your dream was my dream, too....I am the enemy you killed, my friend*. Most of us are, I

imagine, capable of grasping this, but not everyone is gifted with the ability to live it, and to stimulate the living of it in others.

We talked a bit about this. She was sitting on a hay-box back of the food-stall run by the farm at the Oregon Country Fair. I sat on the ground. We agreed that in the end you can only learn how to co-operate by living in a co-operative environment, but that co-operative environments needed protection and support from some ideology or other. If we do not take on the ideologists of other persuasions, we end up with Thatcher. I was happy as a peripheralite community development worker until she came along. What Sally does and what i do are both necessary, but I envy her, and view what I do as necessary rather than adorable.

I'd like to tell you her history, which would be worth a whole chapter to itself; but we have no room for such luxuries. We are here to use our intellects, rather than our intuitions. That's our job at the moment, even if I do my best to subvert it at intervals.

At Auroville the social environment was also very conducive to mutual respect. Josie, a teacher there, spoke with me for some while. The example of life in a commune, albeit one privileged by european remittances, makes moral formulations less essential. Co-operation, as respect for others, can be absorbed through the pores. However, when Josie's eldest daughter went out into the world, she was shocked at the racism and class inequalities she discovered; so perhaps a rationale of co-operation may be useful to those who already behave according to it, as well as an attempt to persuade those who do not.

I couldn't discuss such a paradigm with Logu, because he is not an abstract thinker. He is a local youth who has joined the commune, and it has transformed his life. He is

learning to learn, and learning to grow, whereas his previous livelihood strategy of rickshaw driving, carpentry and labouring seemed nothing but struggling against constraints and limitations. No doubt his life is subsidised by the commune, indirectly at least, but he does not consume significantly more than he would on the outside. The gratifications are spiritual and personal, and he can share them with his sister and her children, who live outside Auroville.

I think he lives the co-operative paradigm. He has a right livelihood - night security, teaching sports, learning, serving in a cafe; he accepts the pre-existent rules, though these are norms rather than legislation; and he is growing into participation in their evolution. When I think of him and Siva, I see the market ideology as the villain in Siva's life. Logu is happier with less materially, because he has so much more spiritually; but I must recall that part of that spiritual happiness is that the tribe to which Logu belongs is unfragmented, and offers security. Siva's tribe is being torn up by aggressive competition for personal gain. The market shrinks the community as people exchange trust for immediate gain; as Etzioni remarked [Etzioni, 1988:250], the more people believe in the market, the less possible it becomes to sustain one.

Could a paradigm change Logu's conceptual set? Maybe not, though in narrative form it might. Example should never be underestimated, since so many people learn in that way. Others, perhaps, have a latent ability to deal in abstracts that was poisoned or discouraged by the 'filling the pot' rather than 'lighting the fire' school of educationalists.

A co-operative worker in the play world claimed to be non-intellectual, so it was a good test of the more visual and demotic attempts at presenting the paradigm. From later remarks I think it was just that people expect abstract arguments to be obscure, which

isn't necessarily the case; and she provided me with an excellent illustrative story. She runs the bulk buy store, and was seeking balloons. A good price could be obtained in Mexico, but she tracked down a worker there by phone to ensure that the working conditions were not horrifically exploitative. Good for her, say I. Another thing I'd say is that many people, including myself, could learn from her about managing anger, and the positive expression of disagreement. There is a lot of technical ability in co-operatives in Bristol, where management committees are not afraid to spend money on facilitators.

Transcendence of ego

if there's one message above all others that cannot be understood in the abstract it is probably the transcendence of the ego. To attempt then to analyse the idea verbally may seem ridiculous, but in the first stage of legitimisation, you record what seems important, even if you don't understand it.

Caroline, one of the founders of the farm commune, is deeply interested as a professional in personal politics; how meetings are run, and how we develop as individuals. To quote from my notes: "we must hold the possibility of reconstructing ourselves very much to the forefront of our minds if we are to prepare ourselves to meet the consequences of our present eco-political trajectory." Within this context, the agreement to agree, which would seem to be a fourth level of co-operation, beyond the procedural, receives more emphasis than it did in my political ideology. At a personal level I agree with this. The development of empathic dispositions is remarkably important, whether through yoga, conversation, touching, or meditation. As a quasi-Quaker I could understand the commitment expressed by Carol and her

husband to the Society of Friends; from which flows, perhaps, an appreciation of her meaning when she distinguishes between unanimity and consensus. The will of the meeting is not merely acquiescence in the majority view. The synergetic transcendence of the individualistic perspective is an integral part of the value of co-operation; the failure to recognise or achieve this benefit is a common source of distress among those who are well-intentioned but lacking experience of collective action.

Alex from the farm, whom I've also mentioned earlier, and I spent a lot of time on metaphysics; we share the view that my whole approach would be rendered redundant if we could all learn to transcend the ego. Not that a commune is all sweetness and light, of course. There was considerable brangling over the polystyrene cups for the fourth of July. That was settled by reference to the way in which responsibilities had been allocated; because Jed had been asked to deal with food-services in a consensual meeting, it would be fair to comment on his performance, but unless he started pouring hot soup down the back of someone's neck, it was up to him how he dealt with it.

There are no algorithms. Only an understanding that you bump into in the way people behave. Not always expected people; and the expected people don't always behave that way. I reckon, however, that we have to fight the political battle at the same time as spreading the spiritual message; and since I'm spiritually deficient, it doesn't do me much harm to take on the hostile ideologies, while others wake up each morning in a wooded valley in Oregon, and milk the cows.

Lucky bastards.

15. Extrodution

We began at a beginning and end with another.

My own direction is uncertain, but the co-operative paradigm is now an inextricable part of my conceptual framework, and so will be exercised whatever I do next. I have already explored its potential to some extent, and will report on some of the responses. However, despite my commitment to practical justification, any judgement at this moment will necessarily focus on the quality of the paradigm, and the exploration of method.

To recapitulate: no socially constructed knowledge is certain. The uncertainty of our sense data, the implausibility of neutrality, and the limitations of language all militate against such a possibility. Rather than seek certain descriptions, then, one might prefer to think in terms of constructing useful ways of mapping experience. Paradigms may have great potential in such conceptual intervention; assimilable, abstracted tools of understanding.

Uncertainty does not preclude the usefulness of academic research, but limits it to the validation of theory; a subordinate criterion. Uncertainty also combines with consequentialism to support the Importance of participation. As a criterion this emerges as legitimization; an acceptance of the relevance of stakeholders in the initial formulation of an issue, in assessing its formalisation, and in adopting and adapting understandings should they so choose. Justification is the predominant criterion; though any attempt to assess justifiability is dependent on the quality of legitimization and validation of the assessment.

One proposed intervention is a paradigm expressing the rationale of co-operation.

This may be stated very simply.

We have needs, and resources. Although some resources are synergetic, and some adequate, there is sufficient scarcity to suggest that humans, as we are presently constituted, will find themselves in competitive circumstances. We can choose to respond in a variety of ways. The criteria by which those responses will be assessed are equity, sustainability, diversity and productivity.

A complete absence of social co-ordination would seem to fail on most counts. Enforced co-ordination would seem to fare little better. The ideal might be voluntary co-ordination. Where there is not an immediate coincidence of interests, we can formulate rules by which we voluntarily abide; though if this is to be our habit, equity in the construction of the rules would seem to be essential. From this derives the idea of three levels of co-operation: intuitive, regulative, and procedural.

Unfortunately, problems of scale and exploitation inhibit the practice of co-operation, which necessitates the use of coercion in a reluctant, reformative and normative fashion. Coercion does not, however, become the central dynamic of social co-ordination, any more than does the free market. That ideology has some pretensions to being a complete solution to the problem of scale, as it is manifested in complexity. Judged by the chosen criterion this is not the case. Rather it may be seen as a dynamic which can be combined with defensive coercion and co-operation as a justifiable response to the problem of social co-ordination.

The three dynamics are not, however, symmetrical. Coercion and the free market are destructive of the equilibrium, and are only useful in so far as they are regulated by principles established through procedural co-operation; hence the primacy of the equitable construction of social institutions.

Some reflections on the method

The method and the outcome may therefore be seen as consistent with each other; as indeed they should. Equity in the construction of research is implicit to the paradigm, and if the implications of the paradigm indicated the primacy of coercion or the market, a different method could be justified.

Nevertheless, it would be disappointing if nothing had been learned from the attempt to apply the methodological conclusions. On reflection, however, I'm not sure I would approach it much differently.

Several problems were identified in advance. Forcing people to be free is an age old paradox, and, I would judge, inescapable, at least in the sense that all persuasion is in some sense coercive; and the very act of communication is intrinsically of persuasive intent. Encouraging others to be critical of, as well as sympathetic to one's thoughts is perhaps the best that can be done; as well as to listen *uncritically* until one is confident that one can reproduce their argument to their satisfaction. In that respect, I think I might have reduced the numbers of participants, or ancillary activities, in order to spend more time going back to people; in other words, iteration might be a more productive use of resources than diversity.

Circularity is another irresolvable problem, but basing selection on behaviour rather than on membership of formal co-operatives seems in retrospect a sound approach. Involving some who are unsympathetic did no harm either, if equitable social construction is the aim, the paradigm needs to be intelligible to them as well. I think it is, but perhaps should have specifically built in an inherently hostile audience for the paradigm, once it had been constructed by sympathisers.

Resource constraints are inevitable. I could continue this research for the rest of my life. Time might have been better spent. An investigation of the use of interactive screen work was useful, but perhaps could have come later. Some of the marginal work, which is discussed later, introducing the paradigm as a potential intervention might also have been postponed; but in this latter case, I think it was probably necessary as a way of seeing if the presentation of the paradigm was heading along the right lines. Form and content are inextricably related. Had it proved necessary to alter the form, the content would have been affected, and the course of the research would have had to be amended. In particular, there was useful criticism of my tendency to expect too much; it is possible to start small and build, particularly if one goes for iteration rather than diversity. Of this, more later.

The fourth problem of those which I identified in advance was that of imposed discourse. I did my best to enter the world of those with whom I spoke. Again, iteration might have been a preferable approach; although given my desire to work with people from around the world, this would have stretched the funding even more thinly. In the end, it probably went well, and I don't know what else I could have done. In depth analysis of others' discourses and translation of the paradigm might be a response to this issue, but not necessarily a preferable one. Recall Polanyi's remark about our dependence, in the end, on someone else's intuitive grasp of our messages. Recall

also that the analytic tools you use are not neutral, nor equally owned; so the advantages of being methodical may be defensive, rather than directed to the equitable construction of useful understandings.

Another problem that was foreseen as inherent to the method was whether the paradigm remained reasonably isomorphic. If the process is seen as a refinement of a paradigm, all the participants were contributing to its legitimation. That is pretty well how it appeared to me; but without being privy to the conversations, there is no way for you to assess the value of my opinion. Evidence is available in the appendices which present the research material used [appendices B and D]; but since a paradigm is only seen as belonging to a transient temporal, spatial, and cultural context, the imperfection of second phase legitimation appears to be an inescapable phenomenon; we can only ever achieve an approximation of the ideal. That, however, is not a reason for not trying our best.

Asking myself, then, *since you are convinced it's worth trying, how else might you do it?*, I would still approach the research in roughly the same way. The amendments I would make would be to

- stage the process from questionnaire to narrative more gradually.
- suit the audience more to the stages; the initial process of checking whether the components were intelligible might be best suited to those who are used to reflective thought, though not necessarily to academics.

- once under way, select a smaller group (perhaps 25 people from around the world), though as nearly equally diverse as was possible, and keep returning to them. Ideally, though impracticably, gather them together once you feel you have a coherent paradigm.
- test the paradigm with people whose behaviour suggests that they might be unsympathetic towards it, or unfamiliar with the broader philosophy of co-operation.

Looking back at my aspirations for the construction of paradigms might also be informative. I described a paradigm as

a proposition, not necessarily in verbal form, that cannot be tested empirically, but that can be used to generate empirical propositions;

not a representation of reality, but a heuristic and hermeneutic device; neither valid nor invalid, but more or less useful;

transdisciplinary, adaptable, and holistic, and with the capacity to be integrated with other paradigms;

transcultural, and applicable from an individual to a global scale

The paradigm constructed here would seem to meet the first of these criteria.

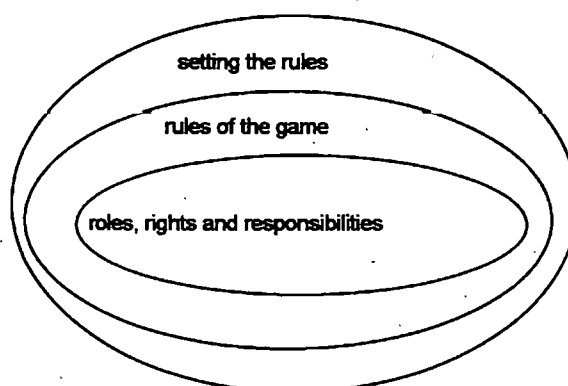
Empirical propositions can very readily be abstracted from it: for example, that

coercion is opposed to productivity, or that a community in which the humanities are valued is more likely to have effective and equitable institutions. Indeed, the co-operative paradigm would seem to score highly in terms of Lakatos' notion of progressive research programmes.

On the second point, the whole process of construction has been experimental; although I may once again regret that its utility has yet to be assessed. The third criterion asserts the virtues of transdisciplinarity, which is very evident in the validation of the paradigm; of adaptability, which is apparent in the use of the paradigm, which has been applied coherently to issues ranging from the trajectory of the Bangladeshi political trajectory, as well as to make proposals for responding to homelessness; holism is achieved, one might claim, by the capacity of the paradigm to act as common ground for superficially incompatible ideologies; and the ease with which it may be integrated with, for example, the paradigms of deconstructionism. Finally, that people of many different backgrounds should have been willing to endorse it is evidence of its transcultural heritage; and it could influence personal behaviour as readily as it could be applied to international trade relations.

All in all, then, I am pleased with it. The real test would be its use in a substantial intervention. I have little doubt that the principle of paradigmatic intervention is potentially effective. A trivial but useful example occurred when someone said to me that he was a reasonable man, but that you had to draw a line somewhere. Using two beer-mats, I illustrated the possibility of thinking instead of a grey area of doubt, confusion, and, if possible negotiation. He bought me a pint two days later, telling me that his life at work had been made an awful lot easier by that simple shift in conception; and has since come back with colleagues for further experiments in mapping problems at work.

Another straw in the wind was an essay on Bangladesh, which used the co-operative paradigm to analyse the development prospects of that country. It was preferred by an Irish, American, and two Bangladeshi aid workers to other analyses published by established academics; but since they are my friends and my supervisor ignored it, I did not push it any further. Again, in Liverpool, I presented a workshop in which I simplified the ideas so that they were represented by a set of concentric circles.



This proved very effective as a context in which to discuss the problems of a community which has funds available for economic regeneration, but under conditions which do not recognise the difficulties of claiming them. Where in Toxteth does one seek matching funds? How do you set up a viable local enterprise where the majority of the people lead a marginal existence on state benefits, and where even the local Co-op stores are closing down? Local conditions have not been recognised in establishing the rules, and a renegotiation of the social contract would be necessary for a sustainable reinvigoration of the area.

Interpreting the paradigm in the language of social contracts also proved useful in an analysis of the response to homelessness, prepared with the research departments of three major charities dealing with the issue. In that instance the coercive, market and co-operative dynamics were used in the analysis, suggesting that homelessness might

be perceived as a need to renegotiate unsustainable personal-social contracts. From this point of view, the case for action research, independent monitoring, and advocacy became evident. Again the argument was well received, both by people working with the homeless, and by the research committee of the International Sociological Society for whom it was prepared.

Alas, none of this amounts to justification; as I have already suggested, these are no more than straws in the wind. The jury is out. The fickle finger of fate is wavering. Nevertheless, as I write these last few sentences, watching the headlights as my neighbours come home from work on a chilly November evening, the work I have done makes sense to me. I would rather be Chagall, and have painted *Donkey on the roof*, but I ain't, and I haven't. This is what I have done instead.

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Appendix A: The participants, broken down by age, sex, socio-economic status, family, and religion.

Sex

Of the 117 participants, 65% were male, and 35% female; an imbalance caused by the number of interviews carried out on the Indian sub-continent. Of the others, 29 were male, compared to 32 females.

Religion

Similarly, religious affiliations were imbalanced. The 53% who declared a religious affiliation were constituted by Christians [15%], Hindus [30%], a Buddhist [1%], and Muslims [7%]. The preponderance of Hindus is not seen as a gross distortion, given the casual commitment that is demanded. Where a European might choose to dissociate themselves from organised religion, an Indian who is not of another faith is likely to describe themselves as Hindu.

Socio-economic status

The figures for socio-economic status represent my own judgement, and are relative to the situation of the participant. Only two participants would be widely considered to be poor, and nine to have a high socio-economic status. Of the remaining 89% there was a fairly normal distribution within the middle-classes.

Age

Age distribution, again an estimate, suggests that 6% of the participants were over 60 years old, 59% between 30 and 60 years, and 35% younger than 30 years old.

Family status

For six of the participants the data is unknown. Of the remaining 111, 58% were married at the time of the interview, and 42% unmarried. 59% had children, including six instances of single parenthood.

Appendix B: The questionnaire offered to colleagues at the Open University

Greetings.

At the CTS seminar on Wednesday 20th April, I am presenting my work to date.

For the remaining hour and fifty minutes, I thought a juggling workshop might be fun. However, to pad out my miserable offerings it seemed like a good idea to ask you to do something, so here it is....

As you may have gathered, I am interested in how it is possible to convey the rationale of co-operation (as opposed to conflict or coercion) as a way of organising human behaviour. Clearly an early stage is to produce a conceptualisation of co-operation which could be conveyed. I've done this, but I would now like to see if it makes sense to anyone.

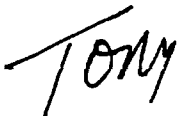
What I'd like you to do, if you will, is to complete the exercise described on the remaining pages. It is rather simplistic and methodologically naive, perhaps, but that will give you the opportunity to contribute a few ideas on how I might amend it.

One alteration from the instructions given - there's no scale on which to mark the extent of your agreement or disagreement, so could you simply use a numerical notation in which 0 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree".

If you feel that there are ambiguities at any point, please mark the text with a large "A".

The form looks quite long, but it shouldn't take more than about 15 minutes; please bring it along to the session, and accept that I will remain eternally indebted to you.

best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony', with a stylized, sweeping underline.

Tony Brauer

14th April 1994

is this co-operation?

Draft text

Is this co-operation?

Propositions for assessment by co-operators

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of these statements by making a mark somewhere between "agree" and "disagree" on the scale that appears with each of them.

There are no hidden purposes. This is simply an attempt to find out who agrees or disagrees with the ideas expressed. Take as little or as much time as you like, but please indicate at the end roughly how long you spent on it. [There's a reminder at the end. The form can be completed in about fifteen minutes, though you may prefer to take longer.]

Because it might be interesting to know whether the ideas are shared by people with particular experiences, you will be asked, again at the end, to indicate some general information about yourself; but your reply will still be appreciated if you decide not to fill this section in.

The same applies to the section which asks if you'd object to the possibility of some follow up questions.

Finally, if you'd like to add some comments of your own, please do so. They will be read, and will contribute to our understanding of the issues we are studying.

Thank you.

is this co-operation?

The quality of our lives is the quality of our awareness.

The environment of which we are aware contains insensate matter as well as other creatures which are aware.

Whether we experience pleasure or distress depends on how well we are able to satisfy a wide range of needs.

Satisfaction of material needs is not enough for health; we also have social and psychological needs to satisfy if we are to be well.

Amongst common human needs are

the ability to obtain, at least from time to time, the response we seek from our environment;

a place in a community;

somebody, or something, to love;

protection from some of the dangers of the environment;

fuel;

a degree of independence;

a sense of how we fit into the general scheme of things;

the chance to do something harmless for no particular reason;

a feeling that we have made a difference.

While the needs of any one human being may be similar to those of another, the way we satisfy them will vary immensely.

Some of the resources which help us to satisfy our needs can be looked on as an endowment from nature, chance, a deity, providence, or something similar.

The other resources which help us to satisfy our needs arise from human activities.

Human beings have established sets of laws and social practices which decide who is entitled to which resources.

There are further sets of laws and social practices concerned with how entitlement to resources may [or must] be transferred.

The principles which decide who gets what usually claim that entitlement to resources depends on, in the first place, merit, and, in the second place, on need, either of which may be modified by a reasonable measure of luck.

There is no way of describing merit that allows us to formulate exact, objective, and unarguable rules for distribution.

Some resources are scarce; [for example, each of us would probably like entitlement to more land, sea and airspace than an equal distribution would give us.]

There's probably enough of certain other resources to go round - we know how to produce enough food for everyone, for example - even if distribution remains a problem.

People are not perfectly idealistic, so that....

we have to control distribution according to how much people contribute, in order to keep people producing what's needed.

When we are with friends, the exchange of affection does not diminish our ability to be friendly; rather, it increases it.

It appears that some of the resources from which we can gain satisfaction are scarce; others would be adequate if they were distributed equally; and some resources don't get used up, but actually increase with use.

Although we often share purposes with others, it seems highly unlikely that there could be two or more people who share every purpose with each other.

There are circumstances in which we are not competing for resources; when the resources increase with use, for example; or when we share a purpose; or when we get as much pleasure from someone else's pleasure as it has cost us for them to obtain that pleasure.

The usual state of affairs is for us to be in competition for resources, even though this need not always lead to conflict.

Co-operation arises most readily when we are not in competition, but co-operation can also be achieved when we are in competition for resources if we can agree on fair rules for settling the differences of our interests.

There is no absolute or objective definition of fair rules, but it is possible to describe the conditions that such rules must meet.

Three such conditions are these:

- 1] that everyone must be taken into consideration
- 2] that everyone who accepts the first condition has a say in the formation of the rules which settle differences of interest
- 3] that we can't base our rules on an objective morality, but we can try to formulate them so that we would support them whoever we were

The lack of objective rules and the unpredictability of human responses makes social organisation a complex task.

is this co-operation?

The complexity of social organisation can be dealt with in a number of ways;

i) some people hope that a mechanism like the free market will disentangle the complexity, even though it is based on the idea that we have no active responsibilities towards each other;

[Please indicate not whether you hope this, but whether you think that it is how some people hope to deal with complexity of social organisation.]

ii) some people believe it is necessary to have some form of central authority intended to make people accept their responsibilities;

iii) some people hope that we have a variety of responsibilities to each other, that we should try to understand each others needs and settle conflicts of interest through personal negotiation

It is unlikely that any one of these approaches will be sufficient on its own:

the market still requires some form of central authority to regulate it

no human society could be entirely controlled from the centre

leaving it entirely up to individuals depends on a level of trust that would be extraordinarily difficult or impossible to achieve

The first two approaches require less understanding than the third.

We could increase the extent to which we left it up to individuals to recognise each others' needs through various forms of education.

is this co-operation?

Thank you for getting this far.

If you'd like to complete any or all of this last page, it would also be appreciated.

Approximate time taken to complete the form so far: minutes

Age range: 15-30 [] 30-45 [] 45-60 [] 60+ []

Range of occupations - your choice/for others/to earn your keep

.....

Have you ever worked in a co-operative? yes/no

If yes, for less than 1 year [in total] []

1 - 2 years []

2 - 5 years []

5+ years []

Female/male

Do you feel that your attitudes have been formed by a recognisable culture such as eg: Nepali Buddhism, Norwegian socialism, Dutch pantheism.....

.....

Do you feel committed to, and willing to disclose, any particular political orientation?

.....

and if you don't mind the possibility of answering follow up enquiries:

Name:.....

Contact address/phone:.....

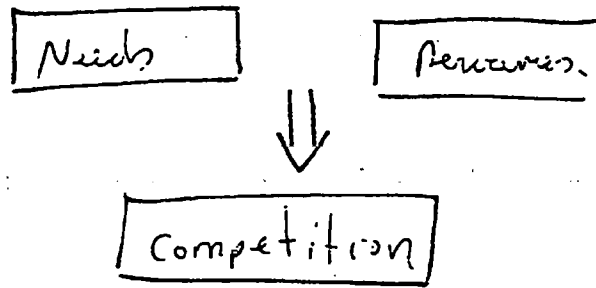
Any other comments?

.....
.....
.....

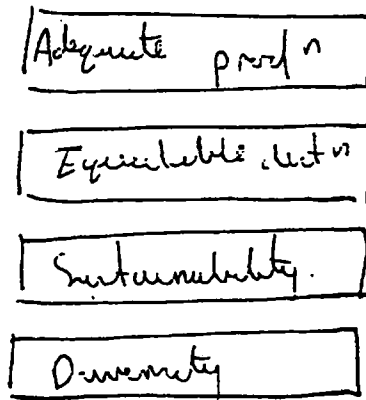
Appendix C: Exploring presentation at the University of Hull

- 1. Copy of a completed response**
- 2. Presentation of response data - range from black [correct] to white [no response]**

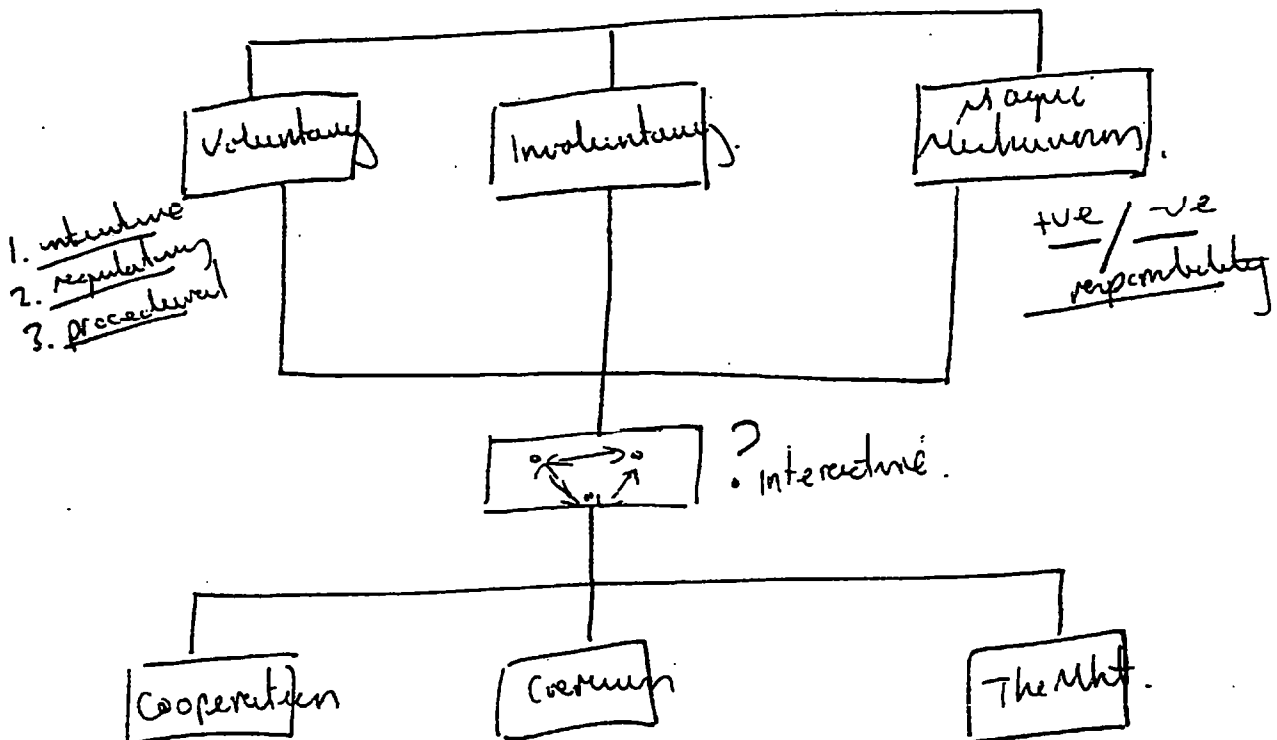
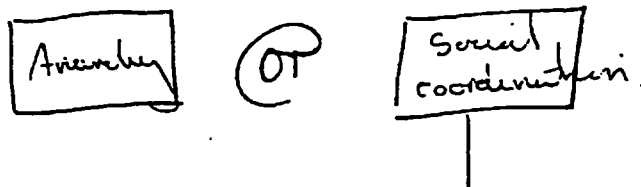
The Situation



The Ends



The Means



| | m | f | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
|----|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 1 | | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | 1 | | 22 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | 1 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | 1 | | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | 1 | | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | 1 | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 1 | | 22 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | | 1 | 22 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | 1 | | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | 1 | | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | 1 | | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | 1 | | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | | 1 | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 15 | | 1 | 23 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 20 | | 1 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | 1 | | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | 1 | | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | | 1 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 27 | 1 | | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 30 | 1 | | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 31 | | 1 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 32 | | 1 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 33 | | 1 | 23 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 34 | 1 | | 25 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 35 | 1 | | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 36 | 1 | | 48 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 38 | 1 | | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 40 | 1 | | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 41 | 1 | | 22 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 47 | 1 | | 27 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 48 | | 1 | 30 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 52 | | 1 | 36 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix D - An early form of the argument

A view of co-operation

There are a number of possible ways of co-ordinating the way we behave towards each other.

- People can be forced to work together. This is the authoritarian approach.
- People can be made to work together because if they don't they won't be allowed to have much of what they want. This approach is based on commercial relationships between people.
- A third approach is co-operation. This is based on people trying to help each other to achieve what each of them wants.

The discussion here looks at why we might prefer one or other of these approaches, or why a mixture of all three may be necessary.

Meeting our needs

It can be argued that although we spend a lot of time co-operating with each other, our circumstances frequently place us in competition.

The reasoning goes like this.

Human beings have a wide variety of needs, some of which are material, and some of which are emotional, involving how we feel about ourselves, and how we relate to others and to our environment.

We use a variety of resources to meet those needs. We have limited stocks of some of these resources, but not all resources are scarce. For example, looking at the stars can satisfy our need for beauty, but it doesn't mean there's any less sky for others to enjoy.

It is also possible to argue that we can create sources of satisfaction. When someone smiles at me, it contributes to my well-being, but need not involve any costs to the person who smiles. Indeed, if you smile at me, I feel good, and smile at someone else, and so it goes on. We are creating goodwill, and there need be no significant costs involved.

It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that trying to meet our needs will sometimes demand the use of scarce resources. On the other hand, it will sometimes cost nothing to meet our needs, and at other times we seem able to give pleasure to ourselves and others at the same time.

Unfortunately, we can't meet all our needs from these free resources. However close we may feel to another person, however much pleasure we take in their happiness, there are likely to be times when our needs put us into competition with each other.

The problem of social organisation

This competition leads to the problem of social organisation.

Of course, it is possible to do without social organisation. One can simply try to satisfy oneself without caring about other people at all. However, while this may work in the short term for a few people, it seems likely that in the longer term we are likely to get further by working together to some extent.

At times this will be very obvious; if we're all aboard a leaking lifeboat, it would be silly to fight rather than to bail, for example. At other times it will be less obvious, until we consider what society would be like if we didn't have some measure of co-operation.

However, even if we agree on the need for some measure of co-operation, there are still questions left unanswered. Perhaps the most important of these is *how are we to decide on the best form of social organisation?*

One answer goes like this.

Social organisation is a set of rules which, at least in theory, apply to everyone in the community. Obviously, different communities have tended to use different sets of rules. Maoist China was organised differently to France, and both were organised differently to the Kingdom of Lesotho.

It is interesting to note, though, that looking round the world today, there seems to be more agreement about the conditions that any set of rules for social organisation should try to meet.

Some would argue that these are expressed in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. Without wishing to disagree with the ideas behind the declaration, the guidelines will be expressed differently here.

What makes rules fair?

The guidelines expressed here are intended to help us decide when the rules applied to any human community are fair and reasonable. They are intended to apply not only to the formal laws written into the statute books of nations, but also to the informal laws and agreements which exist between friends and colleagues. Even though these agreements will not always have been written down, and may not even have been put into words, they are still the rules by which we seek to co-ordinate our behaviour with others.

The suggestion made here is that there are four guidelines which enable us to identify rules which are fair and reasonable.

- firstly, that everyone who is affected by a rule should be taken into account when it is formed.
- secondly, that we should take the whole person into account; emotional needs may not always be as urgent as physical needs, but this does not mean they are less important in the long run.
- thirdly, that rules should be designed by the people they are going to affect. There is no justice in the powerful forcing their own laws onto others.
- fourthly, that, when designing rules, we should try to share others concerns.

These guidelines are perhaps most easily remembered by the single-word tags; *concern*, *holism*, *consent*, and *listening*. The guidelines form a group. None of them is likely to work on its own.

The elements of social organisation

One comment may immediately leap to mind. These guidelines sound fine, but they're idealistic and thoroughly impractical.

This is a fair criticism.

It seems likely that there will always be some people who don't want to go along with the guidelines. Another difficulty is that unless people are skilled at reaching agreements, it can be a long and complicated business.

These two difficulties are often used as reasons for denying the third guideline; that rules should be designed by the people who are going to be affected by them. To a greater or lesser extent, it is argued that people are not in a position to decide what is best for themselves.

In some communities, the state takes over control of as many aspects of human life as it can. In most societies, nowadays, there is at least a pretence of consulting people; but being allowed to vote every four or five years is not the same as choosing the rules that are going to structure your life.

Having a powerful state, then, may help to overcome the difficulties of agreeing and enforcing collective decisions, but does so at a cost to our freedom. This is the weakness of the authoritarian approach.

In response, many people have taken the view that the state should restrict itself to protecting commercial exchanges by punishing fraud, theft and physical brutality. As long as you are not actively harming someone, it is said, no-one has the right to interfere with what you do, but fraud, theft and physical brutality interfere with fair exchange. Fair exchange is seen as a mechanism which ensures that everyone gets what they deserve.

Going further, it is often argued that if no-one gets more than they deserve, there is a strong incentive to work hard. As a result, everyone will work to have goods to exchange, and we will all be better off.

It would be silly to deny that fair exchange benefits all who are involved. The difficulty is that not all exchange is fair; and to have a system of exchange which is both fair and

effective in meeting our needs, it is not enough simply to avoid theft, fraud and physical brutality. There are two huge problems with this approach.

Firstly, those with power will get the best of most exchanges, simply because they are powerful, and there will be increasing differences between those who have and those who do not. Since the exchanges that have taken place have not been fair, the increasing difference between the rich and powerful and the weak and poor cannot be seen as fair, either. This seems to lead to a cycle of protest, repression and hostility.

Organising society on the basis of commercial relations is therefore unlikely to meet the first and third guidelines; those that suggest that concern and consent are necessary to a just society.

There is a second reason for challenging this approach. If we believe that we will only get from others what we can squeeze from them, there is a strong incentive to squeeze. Encouraging us to see each other simply in terms of a commercial relationship discourages us from recognising our needs for positive emotional relationships.

The commercial approach, then, also fails to meet the second and the fourth guidelines; that we take the whole person into account, and that we try to understand what matters to them.

Where does that get us?

It seems, then, that even if we decide that it is preferable for people to try to work within certain rules, we will still have problems.

We can certainly try to agree to guidelines which describe fair and reasonable sets of rules.

Indeed, if guidelines such as *concern*, *consent*, *holism* and *listening* could be followed, it seems likely that the rules we lived by would be fair and reasonable.

However, we cannot expect this approach to work on its own.

Unless or until we all become expert at following the guidelines, we will have to accept some degree of state authority; and since we cannot get to know everyone we deal with personally, we will have to accept some degree of commercialism in our dealings with each other.

All the same, state authority and commercial relations are necessary evils.

If we wanted to claim that they are actually desirable in themselves, we would either have to explain why the guidelines were wrong, or show that state authority or commercialism complied with them. If we're not willing to make either of these claims, it seems necessary to take a thoroughly different approach.

This would include seeking to develop our skills at taking others into account, reaching agreements, and being aware of the whole range of needs that are important to others and ourselves: *concern*, *consent*, *holism* and *listening*.

There is a further point. The authoritarian and commercial approaches actually prevent us from moving closer to a set of rules that would meet the guidelines for a fair and reasonable form of social organisation.

This preferred form can be called *co-operation*.

A View of Co-operation

The view of co-operation suggested here can be summarised like this.

Human beings have a wide range of needs. Very often these needs put us into competition with each other. We can respond to this in a variety of ways, but if we can manage to co-operate, we are likely to get further in the long run.

There are three kinds of co-operation noted here. The first and simplest kind is when working together is obviously for everyone's immediate benefit; when you have flour and I have yeast, and together we bake bread.

The second kind of co-operation is when we are in competition, but are able to agree to work within a set of rules; we agree that if you cut the loaf in half, I'll get first choice of which half to take.

The third kind of co-operation is trying to agree the guidelines that will indicate when the agreements we reach are fair.

Concern, consent, holism and listening have been suggested here; the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights is another example of this third level of co-operation.

[Some might say we need a fourth level of co-operation - an agreement about how to decide which of these sets of guidelines is to be preferred. Fortunately, the ideas expressed here are just another way of saying what the United Nations have already agreed.]

It must be admitted that there is still a long way to go before we all have the skills to apply the third level guidelines to our attempts at second level co-operation; that is, co-operation in competitive circumstances.

All the same, if we want our own fulfilment to be matched by other people's, co-operation would seem to be preferable as a basis for social organisation to the authoritarian and commercial approaches. It is also quite probable that through helping each other, we can each get further than we would be able to do on our own. This is especially likely when we consider the whole range of human needs.

A final point should also be made: there is no good reason for authoritarian and commercial approaches other than to compensate for our lack of co-operative skills. For those who believe that the aim of social organisation is to try to satisfy our needs without injustice, learning how to co-operate may seem to be the most important learning that anyone could do.